What is Philosophy?

What is Philosophy?

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About this Book

"What is Philosophy?" is a textbook for introductory philosophy classes. It uses guided readings of primary philosophical texts to introduce students to multiple aspects and perspectives of global philosophical traditions.

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I. INTRODUCTION TO INTRODUCTION TO PHILOSOPHY

A. Crash Course™ Introduction

1. Begin with this video

(Consider watching this twice. Considering taking notes. In watching it and taking notes ask these questions: What is Hank saying philosophy is? What is the relevance of the study of philosophy to your life?)

A YouTube element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: https://whatisphilosophy.pressbooks.sunycreate.cloud/?p=81

Exercises

1. Now list at least three things Hank said that you found interesting or important.

1.

2.

3.

Others?

2. Having a philosophy versus doing philosophy

In the video, Hank makes the claim that while many find philosophy "hard, enlightening, frustrating" it is also something you already do. This is because, whether or not you are aware of it, you base your life on the philosophical opinions you hold and, in many cases, take for granted. You have basic beliefs about what is real, what you know, what is the right way to live your life, and what is valuable and not valuable. Your beliefs about these things are philosophical beliefs.

Some of you might say, "Okay, Koch, I have philosophical beliefs, but these are just my opinions. I have a right to my opinions."

My response to this is, "Yes, I agree you have a right to your opinions.[1] However, the fact that a belief is your opinion does not make it true. Others hold opinions that contradict yours and consequences of genuine importance depend on whether your opinion is correct."

Let's briefly consider an example. Throughout this book we will be looking at cases such as this to bring into focus the real-world significance of philosophy.

I have a friend S. S, his wife and family are devout Roman Catholics. They belief that core Catholic beliefs such as god exists, the doctrine of the Trinity[2], and the miracle of transubstantiation[3]. These beliefs have genuine consequences for how they live their lives. This includes how they raise their children.

Another friend, A, is an atheist. So is her husband. They do not believe there is a god. They believe that much of what S believes is nonsense.

Yet another friend, H, believes that both S and A do not know what they are talking about. That it is silly to believe or not believe in god. All one should do is live a stress free and happy life and not worry about such things.

If S is right, A and H are going to suffer eternal damnation. If H and A are right S is wasting much of his life and filling his children with nonsense.

Both S and A believe they know the truth and there are good reasons for them having such knowledge. H believes both S and A are deluding themselves. One cannot know what they claim to know.

S, A and H have different philosophical beliefs and these philosophical beliefs make a significant difference

1. But this itself is a philosophical position. Not everyone agrees that each individual has a right to their opinions. Throughout history people have felt justified in punishing individuals who have the wrong opinions.
2. This is the view that God is one single God but has three aspects God the Father, God the Son, and the Holy Spirit of God. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Trinity)
3. This is the view that during the Roman Catholic Mass the priest transforms ordinary bread and wine into the actual body and blood of God the Son. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Transubstantiation)

for how they live their lives. They cannot all be right. Their beliefs contradict each other. And this does not just apply to religious beliefs. This applies to beliefs about science, about, society, about the self and identity, and, in fact, the full spectrum of believes upon which we build our lives. We disagree, we come into conflict with, sometimes we battle with people who have beliefs different from us but rarely do we take the time to examine these foundational beliefs. Philosophy is the examination of these foundational beliefs. It gives us the tools to look carefully at what we take for granted as true and see whether we do genuinely have good reason to believe that such things are true.

What are some of your foundational beliefs? Do you have good reasons to believe them? If you do, what are those good reasons? If you do not have good reasons, why do you have those beliefs?

Exercises

2. Try to list some of these beliefs.

Belief A:

Reason(s) for Belief A:

Belief B:

Reason(s) for Belief B:

Belief C:

Reason(s) for Belief C:

Other beliefs?

B. The Origins of Philosophy

Philosophy, like all areas of study, has a history. Better put, it has histories. That is because philosophical thought developed independently in many different societies at different times in their history. Today much of what we study as philosophy can be traced to Ancient Athens in Greece where the now globally famous philosophers Socrates, Plato and Aristotle raised fundamental questions about the nature of reality and what it is to know. They did this in order to answer the basic question asked by Socrates: How should one live one's life?

This Socratic question, like most philosophy, is asked because in Ancient Greece, people began to question the mythological and religious assumptions on which Greek society had been built. Philosophy calls into question the assumption that tradition, that what previous generations thought to be true is true, is authoritative. Most philosophical questioning begins in this way whether was in ancient China, South Asia or the contemporary United States. People ask, should I believe what you tell me to believe simply because you tell me it is true? Should I live my life that way you tell me to live my life simply because you tell me that is how I should live it? This leads to what Socrates called "the examined life."

One tool philosophers use in the examination of life, in the examination of traditional assumptions about the way the world is — and it is important to note that in the world of the 21st century C.E. traditional assumptions now include the assumption of the veracity of the scientific worldview — is took look at what past philosophers have written. The philosophers of the past were extraordinary thinkers. Their thought created the world we live in. Their thoughts are now interwoven into the fabric of our fundamental assumptions about the world. Notions such as the right of the individual to just treatment, the utility of the hypothetical empirical method of science, and the view that the earth and the universe have a deep history that goes back billions of years are the result of our coming to accept the arguments of past philosophers. This book makes extensive use of that tool we will examine philosophical issues by examining the arguments makes by different philosophers in different historical and societal context. In doing this we will begin with the great philosophers of ancient Greece, Socrates and Plato. Then we will go to the other end of Eurasia and encounter the Confucian and Daoist traditions by reading selected chapters of the extraordinary Daoist work *Zhuangzi*. After that we will jump forward 1500 years to Rene Descartes and then more contemporary thinkers.

This book contains both extensive passages of primary philosophical text paired with introductions and commentaries. It important that you read everything and read it carefully. The book will call to your attention important passages claims and arguments and will try to help you understand what will sometimes be challenging reading. Part of the reason, though, for having you read contemporary texts, is so that you can make your own discoveries and so that you can learn and think for yourself. Such discovery learning is an important part of this class. It is okay that you sometimes are confused and sometimes ask yourself, "What the heck does this mean?" All I ask is that you try to find your way out of the confusion and answer the "What the heck?" question yourself. By doing this you should become a better reader, a more accomplished thinker. You should learn a great deal of philosophy and begin to become somewhat of a philosopher yourself. Perhaps, even, through this treading, thinking, learning about philosophy and coming to philosophize, this course will change your fundamental assumptions and the way your live your life. That is what, ultimately, what philosophy is about.

In the remainder of this chapter, I will briefly introduce you to the Ancient Greek and Chinese philosophical traditions, elucidate the relation between philosophy and philosophizing, and give an overview of the chief

areas of philosophical examination. After this you will read your first philosophical work, *The Defense of Socrates* better know as *Plato's Apology*.

1. Ancient Greece

The term "Philosophy" comes from the Ancient Greek, "*?ιλοσο?ία*" or "philosophia."[1] This is a compound word consisting of "*Φιλο*" or "Philo," which is one of the Ancient Greek words for love, and "*Σο?ία*" or "Sophia," which is usually translated as "wisdom." Thus, philosophy is the love of wisdom.

Due to these Ancient Greek roots, in the European philosophical tradition, it is sometimes claimed that philosophy begins with the Athenian thinkers **Socrates** (470-399 BCE) and **Plato** (428-348 BCE). Other times, the advent of philosophy is attributed to an assortment of earlier thinkers called "Presocratics." The term "**Presocratic**" applies to early Greek cosmologists (cosmologist: a thinker who attempts to understand the basic nature of cosmos), mathematical and geometric theorists, and natural philosophers (thinkers who attempt to explain the natural world without the benefit of the scientific method) who lived before the end of the fifth century BC. Another assortment "pre-philosophical" theorists not considered Presocratics are called "**Sophists**." The sophists were itinerant teachers who charged for lesions. The Sophists **claimed** to be able to teach "**Sophia**" or wisdom. For the most part the Sophists were concerned with the teaching of **rhetoric**, or persuasive speaking. Those who claim that philosophy originates in with Socrates and Plato attribute the beginning of philosophy to the attacks of Socrates and his follower Plato against the Sophists. The contrast between Socrates claim to be a philosopher in contrast with the Sophists is presented in Plato's *Apology*. However, many of his contemporaries considered Socrates to be a Sophist.

Perhaps the earliest Presocratic thinker is **Thales of Miletus**[2] (c. 624-546 BC) who is considered the founder of the Milesian School. Better known than Thales is **Pythagoras of Samos** (c. 550-500) who came from southern Italy and is a figure shrouded in myth. There are many legends about Pythagoras, but what he actually did, and thought is subject to a great deal of dispute. The earliest accounts of Pythagoras portray him as a sort of shaman who believed in "**metempsychosis**," the doctrine of the repeated incarnation of a soul over many lives. He is considered the founder of **Pythagorianism**. The Pythagoreans were much respected by Plato. They believed in metempsychosis, strict rules of diet and conduct, including sexual abstinence, and that mathematics were crucial in understanding the nature of the universe. They were said to have sworn oaths to the "*tetraktys* of the *dekad*" which portrays the number 10 as a triangle of four and is a graphic representation of the fact that 4 3 2 1 = 10.

Heraclitus of Ephesus (fl. c. 500) is one of the best known the Pre-Socratics, even though nothing is known of his life. Heraclitus' book has been famous for its obscurity since antiquity. About 100 sentences of this book survive. Heraclitus refers to the logos, or word, as the ultimate reflection of reason and order in the universe. Perhaps his most famous saying is: "We step and do not step into the same rivers; we are and we are not." This epigram is often cited to support the conclusion that Heraclitus viewed the universe as a place

1. When we go from "*?ιλοσο?ία*" to "philosophia" we are transliterating or using the letters from one alphabet to approximate the letters of another alphabet. In this case the letters of Ancient Greek are transliterated into the letters of the Latin alphabet. Transliteration into the Latin alphabet is called Romanization. As you read this book, do not gloss over these sections that are concerned with the history and the meaning of words. Attention to where words come from and what they mean is part of the toolbox for careful, rigorous thinking.
2. "While he *(Thales)* was studying the stars and looking upwards, he fell into a pit, and a neat, witty Thracian servant girl jeered at him, they say, because he was so eager to know the things in the sky that he could not see what was there before him at his very feet. The same jest applies to all who pass their lives in philosophy."Plato, Theaetetus, 174a

of constant change or flux. In the terminology of Plato this means that the universe was a place of becoming rather than of being.

Map of Greek Settlements in the Mediterranean Sea basin. Greek Colonization Archaic Period by Dipa1965 on Wikimedia Commons, CC-BY-SA.

For the most part the Pre-Socratics were concerned with studying the nature of reality (metaphysics) and of knowledge (epistemology). Reflection on ethical values begins to become intellectually sophisticated with the Sophists and Socrates. **Protagoras** (c. 490-420 BC) was the most celebrated Sophist. He traveled widely in the Mediterranean world and visited Athens, where he was a revered figure, on a number of occasions. He was famous for his agnosticism regarding the existence of the gods and for the aphorism: "Man is the measure of all things." This position is the belief that the truth is what is true to any person who believes it is true. This position comes to be called "subjectivist relativism." It is claimed that this view is self-refuting (in other words, if it is true, then it must be false) because it would mean that if someone believes there is objective truth then it is true there is objective truth and false that there is no objective truth. Relativists throughout history have tried to find a way out of this dilemma.

2. Other Philosophical Traditions

While the term "Philosophy" is Greek in origin and there is a continuous philosophical tradition that stretches back to Ancient Greece, philosophical thinking is a worldwide phenomenon and there are continuous philosophical traditions in other linguistic and civilizational histories. Important examples include South Asia where you have Vedic texts such as the ***Upanishads*** that introduce the key distinction between **Brahman** which is the ultimate reality and the **Atman** which is individual self (soul) that is both part of and divided from Brahman. The compositional history of the Upanishads is uncertain, but the earliest parts

are approximately 7th to 6th centuries BCE. This South Asian tradition includes both Hindu and Buddhist philosophy.

In this class we will look at another important philosophical tradition, that of Chinese Philosophy. Chinese Philosophy is typically traced to the thinker Confucius and the Mythical figure of Laozi. Both Confucianism and Taoism are living philosophies as well as ritualistic and religious practices. The core concern of the Chinese philosophical system is finding the *Dao* (道) to *De* (德).[3] *Dao* is usually translated as "way" or "path." *De* is usually translated as "power" or "virtue." In this sense the famous *Dào Dé Jīng* (*Tao Te Ching*) of Laozi (Lao Tzu) can be translated as *The Book of the Way and of Power*.

More generally, Chinese philosophy is concerned with finding the right conduct or right way to live a virtuous life. One commonality that ties Ancient Greek, South Asian and Chinese Philosophy together is their concern for the relationship between the fundamental nature of the universe, the way things are on the most basic level, and the correct way to live a human life. In all of these traditions there is a sense that there is a gap between the way things appear to be (**appearance**) and the way things are (**reality**). This appearance-reality gap leads to human beings basing their lives on false beliefs on the way things are. Due to this they live lives based on illusions.

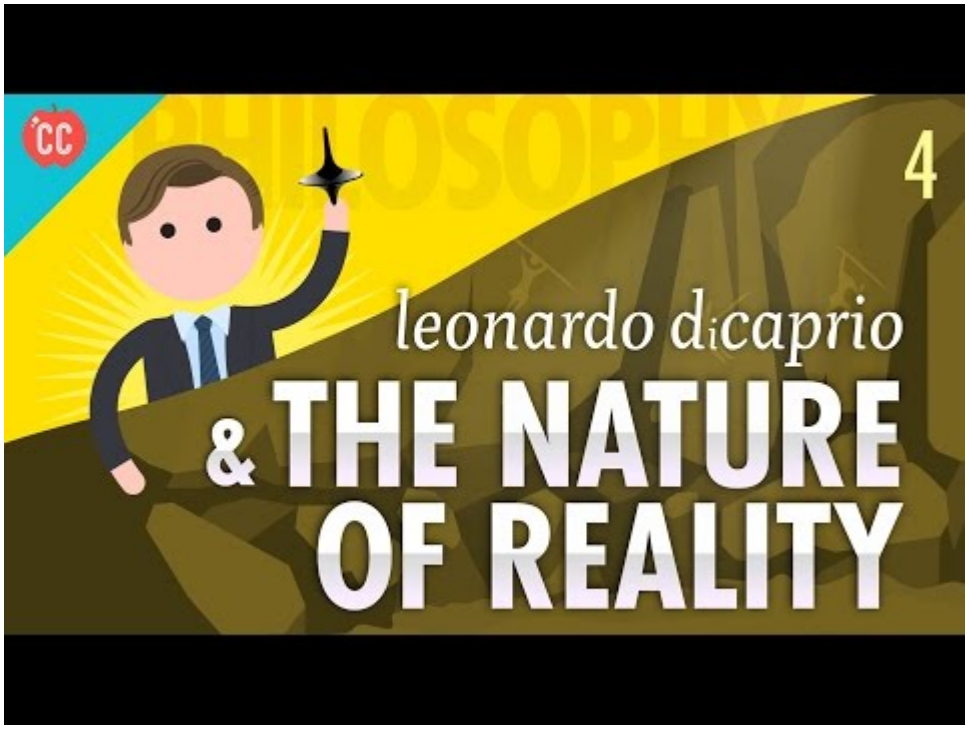
In this class we will study the "inner chapters" of the Zhuangzi a fascinating work of Taoist philosophy.

End this section by watching one more video. The subject of this video is Plato's famous "Allegory of the Cave." The thesis of Plato's "Allegory of the Cave" is that our day-to-day lives are lived in an illusory world were what we believe to be real is just shadows cast on the wall of a cave. The true reality is outside of the cave where the light of the sun shows us reality in all its vivid colors.

This notion, that what you see in your day-to-day life is just a shadow of the real, may seem silly. However, if you accept the legitimacy of science, contemporary physics tells us just that. The reality described by quantum mechanics and by relativity theory is profoundly different from what our five senses seem to inform us of. If contemporary physics is correct, than we are indeed living in a cave.

Here's the video:

3. "*Dao*" is a Romanization using the Hanyu Pinyin system of Romanization. You are likely more familiar with the Romanization "*Tao*." This is the Wade-Giles Romanization. Chinese is a logographic script that uses written characters to represent words. These logograms are not phonetic or alphabetical. They are more like pictures of concepts than an attempt to present the ß of a word through letters. In Wade-Giles "*De*" is "*Te*."



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C. Philosophy and Philosophizing

Philosophizing — that is, making philosophical claims — is a vital part of what it is to be a human being. When you say that something is true, or when you say that you know something, or when you say that something is good, you are making a claim that is based on a series of other claims that ultimately resolve to philosophical claims. In other words, implicit in saying that something is true, or is known, or is good are philosophical assumptions about truth, knowledge and goodness.

Let's start with a simple claim: "It is raining outside."

What makes this claim true or false?

> Is it true or false because you believe it to be false?
>
> Is it true or false because everyone believes it to be false?
>
> Is it true because it can be proven to be true? And false because you can prove it to be false?
>
> (And, if so, what counts as proof? Is sensory evidence proof? Is seeing believing and, thus, believing truth?)
>
> Is it true if it is actually raining outside and false if it is not?
>
> Or is it some other factor or set of factors that determines whether this claim that it is raining is true or false?

These questions are philosophical questions and when you say, "It is raining outside" the truth of your claim rests on your answer to these questions.

In some ways this discussion of the claim "It is raining outside." may seem too simple an example. However, even this simple example shows that philosophical questions like "What makes a statement true?" and "What is the relation between truth and belief?" and "How do we prove a statement to be true?" lie right under our feet everywhere we go. When we make claims about what we know and what is right or wrong and what is good and bad, the philosophy in our lives becomes even more obvious.

In order to distinguish between the philosophizing that underlies our quotidian[1] existence and doing philosophy, it may be useful to make a distinction between having philosophical opinions and doing philosophy. An opinion is a belief. In many cases opinions are *mere* beliefs. In other words, they are beliefs we have but do not have good reasons to have. (Can you give any examples of such beliefs you have?) Some of our opinions are prejudices or pre-judgements. We make a pre-judgement when we arrive at a belief without considering the evidence. For example, some students believe that Philosophy is difficult. But do these students have evidence for this belief? Or is it simply a prejudice. And, of course, it is not uncommon to hold prejudicial beliefs about people based on things such as appearance or group membership.

1. "Everyday" From the Latin '*cotidie*' 'daily'

1. Philosophical argumentation

Philosophy can be characterized as reasoned opposition to prejudice and mere beliefs. The philosopher wants to have good reasons for what she believes. Philosophers are concerned with **arguments**. An argument here is not a disagreement. It is a series of statements were some of the statements (the **premises**) are used to provide good reasons to believe another statement (the **conclusion**) true. In is important to emphasize that in philosophy the point of an argument is to determine what is true. It is not to persuade someone that a statement is true. Persuasion is the purpose of **rhetoric**. Many of the Ancient Greek Sophists were teachers of rhetoric. Rhetoric is the art and study of persuasion. Philosophy is the art and the study of the truth.

Here is an example of a philosophical argument from the French philosopher Rene Descartes.

> P1 If there is thought, there must be a thinker.
>
> P2 If there is a thinker, then the thinker exists.
>
> P3 If I question whether I exist, there is thought.
>
> C The thinker exists.

This argument is called the "cogito argument" and is sometimes abbreviated "I think, therefore, I am." Statements **P**1-3 are **p**remises. Statement **C** is the **c**onclusion.

Of course, we make all sorts of arguments, where we give reasons for a conclusion, in our day-to-day lives. At some point you may make an argument for someone to lend you money, or to accept a late paper, or to see you socially. These are not in themselves philosophical arguments. So, what makes an argument an argument a philosophical argument?

It is sometimes said that philosophers ask the "big questions" that do not have settled answers or agreed methods by which to settle the answers, but this is, perhaps, still not clear. Another way of describing philosophy is that philosophy asks questions so fundamental that most of what we believe is based on what we take to be the answers to these questions. For example, a metaphysical philosopher might ask whether material things exist. A material thing is a solid and tangible object. Examples include chairs, atoms and clouds. For the most part, we take it for granted that material things are real. There are, though, good arguments against this belief that material things are real. Philosophy takes seriously such arguments. Another belief many take for granted is that economic growth is a societal good. Again, there are good reasons to question this belief. Philosophers of economics consider the arguments that question this belief.

On this account of what philosophy is, we can say that philosophy is the most radical[2] field of study because philosophers try to get to the root of things. In a way, philosophers are like young children who have not yet learned that some questions (Like, "Why is there blue?") are not supposed to be asked. The difference between the philosopher and the child is the philosophers doesn't just ask the question, the philosopher uses reason and argumentation to find the answer.

"I see, my dear Theaetetus, that Theodorus had a true insight into your nature when he said that you were a philosopher; for wonder is the feeling of a philosopher, and philosophy begins in wonder." (Plato, *Theaetetus* 155c-d, tr. Jowett)

2. From the Latin *radix, radic-* 'root'

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2. Core Areas of Philosophical Study

Philosophy is often divided into two broad areas of concern. These are Theoretical Philosophy and Practical Philosophy. **Theoretical Philosophy** is concerned with determining how the world is and how things in the world are. Two areas of theoretical philosophy are **Metaphysics**, which is concerned with what exists and the nature of existence itself, and **Epistemology**, which is concerned with what knowledge is and how we can have knowledge. **Practical Philosophy** is concerned with what we should do. This includes **Ethics**, **Social and Political Philosophy** and questions about the nature of what is good and beautiful.

While this distinction has some merit, many philosophical concerns integrate both theoretical and practical questions and overflow what can be contained in just these two areas. An example of this is **Existentialism**, a philosophical tradition we will acquaint ourselves with towards the end of the semester.

D. Plato's Apology of Socrates

1. Introduction to Plato's *Apology*

The *Apology of Socrates* (often simply, *Apology*) is a dialogue written by the ancient Athenian philosopher Plato (428-348 BCE). The *Apology* is presented by Plato as Socrates' (470-399 BCE) defense against the accusations that led to his trial in Athens in the year 399 BCE. The word "apology" is misleading here. Socrates is **not** apologizing in this speech. He is defending himself against his accuser. The speech is better translated as the *Defense of Socrates*.

The word "apology" here comes from the Ancient Greek "*apo*" (away from, off) and "*logos*" (word, speech). These words are combined in the Greek and then the Latin "*Apologia*" which means speech in defense.

In reading and discussing the *Apology* it is important to remember that it is Plato's account of what Socrates said at his trial before a jury of the citizens of Athens. Socrates' trial happened; it is an historical event. But we do not have clear knowledge of the details of what happened at the trial. Plato's version is one of a number of versions of what happened. Plato's account is usually considered to be mostly accurate, but Plato is also using the *Apology* to make philosophical claims and arguments.

Socrates (c. 470 – 399 BC) in the *Apology* calls himself "the Gadfly of Athens." At the time of his trial, he is 69 years old. This is elderly in Athenian terms. Socrates is the son of a midwife and a stonemason. By heritage he is not from the Athenian elite. However, Plato's dialogues show him as welcome in the gatherings of the most elite circles in Athens, He has lived his life as a citizen of Athens and created a reputation for himself as something of a street philosopher. This is because, as he describes in his speech, he haunts the Athenian *Agora* or the market district in Athens. There he engages people, often members of the economic, political, military or artistic elite, in conversation. Typically, this conversation takes the form of Socratic "*elenchus*" or cross-examination. Here Socrates begins by asking a question and eliciting an answer to the question. This is followed by a series of further questions and answers that, typically lead to the person being asked the questions, contradicting his (and they always males, for reasons we will discuss) initial answer. While reading the *Apology*, pay attention to how Socrates does this to Meletus. The goal of this Socratic *elenchus* is to try to force people to question the unexamined assumptions on which they base their beliefs and life-choices. In other words, Socrates is trying to force people to examine their pre-judgements. He is particularly concerned with pre-judgements about how one is to live one's life. He believes that most of his fellow Athenians wander through life as if they in the depths of a dark cave with little light and no clear way to go. For Socrates, the examined life, begins with the admission of one's own ignorance. One of the key claims he makes in the *Apology* is that he is wise to the extent that he knows he is not wise. Most of his fellow Athenians do not even have the wisdom that allows them to know they are not wise.

To what extent is this true of you? Do you assume that you know how to make good choices and live a worthwhile life? How would your beliefs stand up to Socratic *elenchus*?

Plato (429–347 BC) was a follower of Socrates; he is one of the "youths" Socrates is accused of corrupting. Plato came from a powerful and wealthy Athenian family. He was 30 when Socrates was put on trial. His activities in the years after Socrates' trial are not completely documented. There is evidence that he left Athens and traveled widely. There are some reasons to believe that he traveled to Egypt in north Africa and that Plato's philosophy was influenced by Egyptian and African thought. Then, after a decade or so, Plato returned to Athens where he founds what came to be known as the Academy of Athens. Plato's

Academy was one of the earliest known organized schools or research institutions in Western Civilization. It was built on a plot of land in the Grove of *Hecademus* or *Academus* from which it derives its name "Academy." We still called institutions of learning "academies" and those who devote their lives to research and knowledge "academics" after Plato's Academy. The Academy lasted for about 300 years after it founded until it was destroyed per the orders of a Roman Council in 84 BCE. During these 300 years many of the most important Greek philosophers, mathematicians, and thinkers were educated at Plato's Academy. These included **Aristotle** (384-322 BCE) who after studying at the Academy founded his own school, the Lyceum. Aristotle is one of the great original and systematic thinkers of European philosophy.

Plato is the chief recorder of the philosophical legacy of Socrates. He is also one of the globally greatest of philosophers in his own right. His written work is referred to as the "dialogues of Plato." Philosophers typically distinguish Socratic Dialogues (e.g. *Apology*) from Platonic Dialogues (e.g. *Symposium*). Socratic Dialogues are interpreted by philosophers and classicists as recounting Socrates' philosophical perspective. Platonic Dialogues are interpreted by philosophers and classicists as recounting Plato's philosophical perspective. There has always been some dispute among philosophers as to where to draw the line between the wisdom of Socrates and the philosophy of Plato. We will discuss this question further when we read and discuss Plato's *Symposium*. *Symposium* is often considered a Platonic dialogue in that it presents Plato's theory of the forms which you were introduced to in the video on the Allegory of the Cave. However, aspects of the *Symposium* may call into question the theory of the forms. We will discuss the extent to which *Symposium* is or is not a defense (an apologia ;)) of the forms.

For now, we begin the reading of primary texts from the history of philosophy the *Apology*. Ideally, through once it once from start to finish. Then, read it again more carefully. As you read this second time, note what does and does not make sense to you. Be ready to ask about it. Pay particular attention to what Socrates says about his own speech at the start of his speech and then how he follows up on what he says at the start. What are the accusations against him? What, in his view, are the real reasons he is being put on trial? How does he defend himself against these allegations? What verdict does the jury reach? What is Socrates' response to the verdict? Why, in Socrates' view, do the jurors reach the conclusion they reach?

In what follows Socrates' speech is in plain text. My insertions are in *italics*. Do not confuse the two.

2. *Apology of Socrates*

By Plato

Translated by Benjamin Jowett

Socrates' Defense

How you have felt, O men of Athens, at hearing the speeches of my accusers, I cannot tell; but I know that their persuasive words almost made me forget who I was – such was the effect of them; and yet they have hardly spoken a word of truth. But many as their falsehoods were, there was one of them which quite amazed me; – I mean when they told you to be upon your guard, and not to let yourselves be deceived by the force of my eloquence. They ought to have been ashamed of saying this, because they were sure to be detected as soon as I opened my lips and displayed my deficiency; they certainly did appear to be most shameless in saying this, unless by the force of eloquence they mean the force of truth; for then I do indeed

admit that I am eloquent. But in how different a way from theirs! Well, as I was saying, they have hardly uttered a word, or not more than a word, of truth; but you shall hear from me the whole truth: not, however, delivered after their manner, in a set oration duly ornamented with words and phrases. No indeed! but I shall use the words and arguments which occur to me at the moment; for I am certain that this is right, and that at my time of life I ought not to be appearing before you, O men of Athens, in the character of a juvenile orator – let no one expect this of me. And I must beg of you to grant me one favor, which is this – If you hear me using the same words in my defence which I have been in the habit of using, and which most of you may have heard in the agora, and at the tables of the money-changers, or anywhere else, I would ask you not to be surprised at this, and not to interrupt me. For I am more than seventy years of age, and this is the first time that I have ever appeared in a court of law, and I am quite a stranger to the ways of the place; and therefore I would have you regard me as if I were really a stranger, whom you would excuse if he spoke in his native tongue, and after the fashion of his country; – that I think is not an unfair request. Never mind the manner, which may or may not be good; but think only of the justice of my cause, and give heed to that: let the judge decide justly and the speaker speak truly.

Exercises

1. In the preceding paragraph, Plato has Socrates make a set of claims about how he will speak to the assembled jurors. List these claims:

1.

2.

3.

Socrates also makes a request of the citizen-jurors. What is this request?

1.

And first, I have to reply to the older charges and to my first accusers, and then I will go to the later ones. For I have had many accusers, who accused me of old, and their false charges have continued during many years; and I am more afraid of them than of Anytus and his associates, who are dangerous, too, in their own way. But far more dangerous are these, who began when you were children, and took possession of your minds with their falsehoods, telling of one Socrates, a wise man, who speculated about the heaven above, and searched into the earth beneath, and made the worse appear the better cause. These are the accusers whom I dread; for they are the circulators of this rumor, and their hearers are too apt to fancy that speculators of this sort do not believe in the gods. And they are many, and their charges against me are of ancient date, and they made them in days when you were impressible – in childhood, or perhaps in youth – and the cause when heard went by default, for there was none to answer. And, hardest of all,

their names I do not know and cannot tell; unless in the chance of a comic poet. But the main body of these slanderers who from envy and malice have wrought upon you – and there are some of them who are convinced themselves, and impart their convictions to others – all these, I say, are most difficult to deal with; for I cannot have them up here, and examine them, and therefore I must simply fight with shadows in my own defense, and examine when there is no one who answers. I will ask you then to assume with me, as I was saying, that my opponents are of two kinds – one recent, the other ancient; and I hope that you will see the propriety of my answering the latter first, for these accusations you heard long before the others, and much oftener.

Socrates here makes a distinction between two kinds of accusers. Who are these two different kinds of accusers? Who are the more dangerous accusers? Why are more dangerous?

Well, then, I will make my defense, and I will endeavor in the short time which is allowed to do away with this evil opinion of me which you have held for such a long time; and I hope I may succeed, if this be well for you and me, and that my words may find favor with you. But I know that to accomplish this is not easy – I quite see the nature of the task. Let the event be as God wills: in obedience to the law I make my defense.

I will begin at the beginning, and ask what the accusation is which has given rise to this slander of me, and which has encouraged Meletus to proceed against me. What do the slanderers say? They shall be my prosecutors, and I will sum up their words in an affidavit. "Socrates is an evil-doer, and a curious person, who searches into things under the earth and in heaven, and he makes the worse appear the better cause; and he teaches the aforesaid doctrines to others." That is the nature of the accusation, and that is what you have seen yourselves in the comedy of Aristophanes[1]; who has introduced a man whom he calls Socrates, going about and saying that he can walk in the air, and talking a deal of nonsense concerning matters of which I do not pretend to know either much or little – not that I mean to say anything disparaging of anyone who is a student of natural philosophy. I should be very sorry if Meletus could lay that to my charge. But the simple truth is, O Athenians, that I have nothing to do with these studies. Very many of those here present are witnesses to the truth of this, and to them I appeal. Speak then, you who have heard me, and tell your neighbors whether any of you have ever known me hold forth in few words or in many upon matters of this sort. ... You hear their answer. And from what they say of this you will be able to judge of the truth of the rest.

As little foundation is there for the report that I am a teacher, and take money; that is no more true than the other. Although, if a man is able to teach, I honor him for being paid. There is Gorgias of Leontium, and Prodicus of Ceos, and Hippias of Elis, who go the round of the cities, and are able to persuade the young men to leave their own citizens, by whom they might be taught for nothing, and come to them, whom they not only pay, but are thankful if they may be allowed to pay them. There is actually a Parian philosopher residing in Athens, of whom I have heard; and I came to hear of him in this way: – I met a man who has spent a world of money on the Sophists, Callias the son of Hipponicus, and knowing that he had sons, I asked him: "Callias," I said, "if your two sons were foals or calves, there would be no difficulty in finding someone to put over them; we should hire a trainer of horses or a farmer probably who would improve and perfect them in their own proper virtue and excellence; but as they are human beings, whom are you thinking of placing over them? Is there anyone who understands human and political virtue? You must have thought about this as you have sons; is there anyone?" "There is," he said. "Who is he?" said I, "and of what country? and what does he charge?" "Evenus the Parian," he replied; "he is the man, and his

1. Aristophanes is one of the characters in the next dialogue we will read, Symposium. He was one of the great comic dramatists of Athens and his funny often ribald work is still performed today. For example: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yYYQIn_sC-4This is Ancient Greek. You can turn on the subtitles.

charge is five minae." Happy is Evenus, I said to myself, if he really has this wisdom, and teaches at such a modest charge. Had I the same, I should have been very proud and conceited; but the truth is that I have no knowledge of the kind.

In this paragraph Socrates makes a crucial distinction between himself and the itinerant teachers called "Sophists." Why, according to Socrates, is he not a sophist?

I dare say, Athenians, that someone among you will reply, "Why is this, Socrates, and what is the origin of these accusations of you: for there must have been something strange which you have been doing? All this great fame and talk about you would never have arisen if you had been like other men: tell us, then, why this is, as we should be sorry to judge hastily of you." Now I regard this as a fair challenge, and I will endeavor to explain to you the origin of this name of "wise," and of this evil fame. Please to attend then. And although some of you may think I am joking, I declare that I will tell you the entire truth. Men of Athens, this reputation of mine has come of a certain sort of wisdom which I possess. If you ask me what kind of wisdom, I reply, such wisdom as is attainable by man, for to that extent I am inclined to believe that I am wise; whereas the persons of whom I was speaking have a superhuman wisdom, which I may fail to describe, because I have it not myself; and he who says that I have, speaks falsely, and is taking away my character. And here, O men of Athens, I must beg you not to interrupt me, even if I seem to say something extravagant. For the word which I will speak is not mine. I will refer you to a witness who is worthy of credit, and will tell you about my wisdom – whether I have any, and of what sort – and that witness shall be the god of Delphi. You must have known Chaerephon; he was early a friend of mine, and also a friend of yours, for he shared in the exile of the people, and returned with you. Well, Chaerephon, as you know, was very impetuous in all his doings, and he went to Delphi and boldly asked the oracle to tell him whether – as I was saying, I must beg you not to interrupt – he asked the oracle to tell him whether there was anyone wiser than I was, and the Pythian prophetess answered that there was no man wiser. Chaerephon is dead himself, but his brother, who is in court, will confirm the truth of this story.

Why do I mention this? Because I am going to explain to you why I have such an evil name. When I heard the answer, I said to myself, What can the god mean? and what is the interpretation of this riddle? for I know that I have no wisdom, small or great. What can he mean when he says that I am the wisest of men? And yet he is a god and cannot lie; that would be against his nature. After a long consideration, I at last thought of a method of trying the question. I reflected that if I could only find a man wiser than myself, then I might go to the god with a refutation in my hand. I should say to him, "Here is a man who is wiser than I am; but you said that I was the wisest." Accordingly I went to one who had the reputation of wisdom, and observed to him – his name I need not mention; he was a politician whom I selected for examination – and the result was as follows: When I began to talk with him, I could not help thinking that he was not really wise, although he was thought wise by many, and wiser still by himself; and I went and tried to explain to him that he thought himself wise, but was not really wise; and the consequence was that he hated me, and his enmity was shared by several who were present and heard me. So I left him, saying to myself, as I went away: Well, although I do not suppose that either of us knows anything really beautiful and good, I am better off than he is – for he knows nothing, and thinks that he knows. I neither know nor think that I know. In this latter particular, then, I seem to have slightly the advantage of him. Then I went to another, who had still higher philosophical pretensions, and my conclusion was exactly the same. I made another enemy of him, and of many others besides him.

After this I went to one man after another, being not unconscious of the enmity which I provoked, and I lamented and feared this: but necessity was laid upon me – the word of God, I thought, ought to be considered first. And I said to myself, Go I must to all who appear to know, and find out the meaning of the oracle. And I swear to you, Athenians, by the dog I swear! – for I must tell you the truth – the result of

my mission was just this: I found that the men most in repute were all but the most foolish; and that some inferior men were really wiser and better. I will tell you the tale of my wanderings and of the "Herculean" labors, as I may call them, which I endured only to find at last the oracle irrefutable. When I left the politicians, I went to the poets; tragic, dithyrambic, and all sorts. And there, I said to myself, you will be detected; now you will find out that you are more ignorant than they are. Accordingly, I took them some of the most elaborate passages in their own writings, and asked what was the meaning of them – thinking that they would teach me something. Will you believe me? I am almost ashamed to speak of this, but still I must say that there is hardly a person present who would not have talked better about their poetry than they did themselves. That showed me in an instant that not by wisdom do poets write poetry, but by a sort of genius and inspiration; they are like diviners or soothsayers who also say many fine things, but do not understand the meaning of them. And the poets appeared to me to be much in the same case; and I further observed that upon the strength of their poetry they believed themselves to be the wisest of men in other things in which they were not wise. So I departed, conceiving myself to be superior to them for the same reason that I was superior to the politicians.

At last I went to the artisans, for I was conscious that I knew nothing at all, as I may say, and I was sure that they knew many fine things; and in this I was not mistaken, for they did know many things of which I was ignorant, and in this they certainly were wiser than I was. But I observed that even the good artisans fell into the same error as the poets; because they were good workmen they thought that they also knew all sorts of high matters, and this defect in them overshadowed their wisdom – therefore I asked myself on behalf of the oracle, whether I would like to be as I was, neither having their knowledge nor their ignorance, or like them in both; and I made answer to myself and the oracle that I was better off as I was.

This investigation has led to my having many enemies of the worst and most dangerous kind, and has given occasion also to many calumnies, and I am called wise, for my hearers always imagine that I myself possess the wisdom which I find wanting in others: but the truth is, O men of Athens, that God only is wise; and in this oracle he means to say that the wisdom of men is little or nothing; he is not speaking of Socrates, he is only using my name as an illustration, as if he said, He, O men, is the wisest, who, like Socrates, knows that his wisdom is in truth worth nothing. And so I go my way, obedient to the god, and make inquisition into the wisdom of anyone, whether citizen or stranger, who appears to be wise; and if he is not wise, then in vindication of the oracle I show him that he is not wise; and this occupation quite absorbs me, and I have no time to give either to any public matter of interest or to any concern of my own, but I am in utter poverty by reason of my devotion to the god.

There is another thing: – young men of the richer classes, who have not much to do, come about me of their own accord; they like to hear the pretenders examined, and they often imitate me, and examine others themselves; there are plenty of persons, as they soon enough discover, who think that they know something, but really know little or nothing: and then those who are examined by them instead of being angry with themselves are angry with me: This confounded Socrates, they say; this villainous misleader of youth! – and then if somebody asks them, Why, what evil does he practise or teach? they do not know, and cannot tell; but in order that they may not appear to be at a loss, they repeat the ready-made charges which are used against all philosophers about teaching things up in the clouds and under the earth, and having no gods, and making the worse appear the better cause; for they do not like to confess that their pretence of knowledge has been detected – which is the truth: and as they are numerous and ambitious and energetic, and are all in battle array and have persuasive tongues, they have filled your ears with their loud and inveterate calumnies. And this is the reason why my three accusers, Meletus and Anytus and Lycon, have set upon me; Meletus, who has a quarrel with me on behalf of the poets; Anytus, on behalf of the craftsmen; Lycon, on behalf of the rhetoricians: and as I said at the beginning, I cannot expect to get rid of this mass of calumny all in a moment. And this, O men of Athens, is the truth and the whole truth;

I have concealed nothing, I have dissembled nothing. And yet I know that this plainness of speech makes them hate me, and what is their hatred but a proof that I am speaking the truth? – this is the occasion and reason of their slander of me, as you will find out either in this or in any future inquiry.

In the preceding paragraphs, Socrates elaborates what he believes is the reason his "first class" of accusers wants him condemned. Summarize what he is saying here.

In the section that follows he egages Meletus in Elenchus or cross-examination by asking questions. Sometimes this is called the "Socratic method." We will see it again in Symposium. What is the outcome of this cross examination?

I have said enough in my defence against the first class of my accusers; I turn to the second class, who are headed by Meletus, that good and patriotic man, as he calls himself. And now I will try to defend myself against them: these new accusers must also have their affidavit read. What do they say? Something of this sort: – That Socrates is a doer of evil, and corrupter of the youth, and he does not believe in the gods of the state, and has other new divinities of his own. That is the sort of charge; and now let us examine the particular counts. He says that I am a doer of evil, who corrupt the youth; but I say, O men of Athens, that Meletus is a doer of evil, and the evil is that he makes a joke of a serious matter, and is too ready at bringing other men to trial from a pretended zeal and interest about matters in which he really never had the smallest interest. And the truth of this I will endeavor to prove.

Come hither, Meletus, and let me ask a question of you. You think a great deal about the improvement of youth?

Yes, I do.

Tell the judges, then, who is their improver; for you must know, as you have taken the pains to discover their corrupter, and are citing and accusing me before them. Speak, then, and tell the judges who their improver is. Observe, Meletus, that you are silent, and have nothing to say. But is not this rather disgraceful, and a very considerable proof of what I was saying, that you have no interest in the matter? Speak up, friend, and tell us who their improver is.

The laws.

But that, my good sir, is not my meaning. I want to know who the person is, who, in the first place, knows the laws.

The judges, Socrates, who are present in court.

What do you mean to say, Meletus, that they are able to instruct and improve youth?

Certainly they are.

What, all of them, or some only and not others?

All of them.

By the goddess Here, that is good news! There are plenty of improvers, then. And what do you say of the audience, – do they improve them?

Yes, they do.

And the senators?

Yes, the senators improve them.

But perhaps the members of the citizen assembly corrupt them? – or do they too improve them?

They improve them.

Then every Athenian improves and elevates them; all with the exception of myself; and I alone am their corrupter? Is that what you affirm?

That is what I stoutly affirm.

I am very unfortunate if that is true. But suppose I ask you a question: Would you say that this also holds true in the case of horses? Does one man do them harm and all the world good? Is not the exact opposite of this true? One man is able to do them good, or at least not many; – the trainer of horses, that is to say, does them good, and others who have to do with them rather injure them? Is not that true, Meletus, of horses, or any other animals? Yes, certainly. Whether you and Anytus say yes or no, that is no matter. Happy indeed would be the condition of youth if they had one corrupter only, and all the rest of the world were their improvers. And you, Meletus, have sufficiently shown that you never had a thought about the young: your carelessness is seen in your not caring about matters spoken of in this very indictment.

And now, Meletus, I must ask you another question: Which is better, to live among bad citizens, or among good ones? Answer, friend, I say; for that is a question which may be easily answered. Do not the good do their neighbors good, and the bad do them evil?

Certainly.

And is there anyone who would rather be injured than benefited by those who live with him? Answer, my good friend; the law requires you to answer – does anyone like to be injured?

Certainly not.

And when you accuse me of corrupting and deteriorating the youth, do you allege that I corrupt them intentionally or unintentionally?

Intentionally, I say.

But you have just admitted that the good do their neighbors good, and the evil do them evil. Now is that a truth which your superior wisdom has recognized thus early in life, and am I, at my age, in such darkness and ignorance as not to know that if a man with whom I have to live is corrupted by me, I am very likely to be harmed by him, and yet I corrupt him, and intentionally, too; – that is what you are saying, and of that you will never persuade me or any other human being. But either I do not corrupt them, or I corrupt them unintentionally, so that on either view of the case you lie. If my offence is unintentional, the law has no cognizance of unintentional offences: you ought to have taken me privately, and warned and admonished me; for if I had been better advised, I should have left off doing what I only did unintentionally – no doubt I should; whereas you hated to converse with me or teach me, but you indicted me in this court, which is a place not of instruction, but of punishment.

I have shown, Athenians, as I was saying, that Meletus has no care at all, great or small, about the matter. But still I should like to know, Meletus, in what I am affirmed to corrupt the young. I suppose you mean, as I infer from your indictment, that I teach them not to acknowledge the gods which the state acknowledges, but some other new divinities or spiritual agencies in their stead. These are the lessons which corrupt the youth, as you say.

Yes, that I say emphatically.

Then, by the gods, Meletus, of whom we are speaking, tell me and the court, in somewhat plainer terms, what you mean! for I do not as yet understand whether you affirm that I teach others to acknowledge some gods, and therefore do believe in gods and am not an entire atheist – this you do not lay to my charge; but only that they are not the same gods which the city recognizes – the charge is that they are different gods. Or, do you mean to say that I am an atheist simply, and a teacher of atheism?

I mean the latter – that you are a complete atheist.

That is an extraordinary statement, Meletus. Why do you say that? Do you mean that I do not believe in the godhead of the sun or moon, which is the common creed of all men?

I assure you, judges, that he does not believe in them; for he says that the sun is stone, and the moon earth.

Friend Meletus, you think that you are accusing Anaxagoras; and you have but a bad opinion of the judges, if you fancy them ignorant to such a degree as not to know that those doctrines are found in the books of Anaxagoras the Clazomenian, who is full of them. And these are the doctrines which the youth are said to learn of Socrates, when there are not unfrequently exhibitions of them at the theatre (price of admission one drachma at the most); and they might cheaply purchase them, and laugh at Socrates if he pretends to father such eccentricities. And so, Meletus, you really think that I do not believe in any god?

I swear by Zeus that you believe absolutely in none at all.

You are a liar, Meletus, not believed even by yourself. For I cannot help thinking, O men of Athens, that Meletus is reckless and impudent, and that he has written this indictment in a spirit of mere wantonness and youthful bravado. Has he not compounded a riddle, thinking to try me? He said to himself: – I shall see whether this wise Socrates will discover my ingenious contradiction, or whether I shall be able to deceive him and the rest of them. For he certainly does appear to me to contradict himself in the indictment as much as if he said that Socrates is guilty of not believing in the gods, and yet of believing in them – but this surely is a piece of fun.

I should like you, O men of Athens, to join me in examining what I conceive to be his inconsistency; and do you, Meletus, answer. And I must remind you that you are not to interrupt me if I speak in my accustomed manner.

Did ever man, Meletus, believe in the existence of human things, and not of human beings? … I wish, men of Athens, that he would answer, and not be always trying to get up an interruption. Did ever any man believe in horsemanship, and not in horses? or in flute-playing, and not in flute-players? No, my friend; I will answer to you and to the court, as you refuse to answer for yourself. There is no man who ever did. But now please to answer the next question: Can a man believe in spiritual and divine agencies, and not in spirits or demigods?

He cannot.

I am glad that I have extracted that answer, by the assistance of the court; nevertheless you swear in the indictment that I teach and believe in divine or spiritual agencies (new or old, no matter for that); at any rate, I believe in spiritual agencies, as you say and swear in the affidavit; but if I believe in divine beings, I must believe in spirits or demigods; – is not that true? Yes, that is true, for I may assume that your silence gives assent to that. Now what are spirits or demigods? are they not either gods or the sons of gods? Is that true?

Yes, that is true.

But this is just the ingenious riddle of which I was speaking: the demigods or spirits are gods, and you say first that I don't believe in gods, and then again that I do believe in gods; that is, if I believe in demigods. For if the demigods are the illegitimate sons of gods, whether by the Nymphs or by any other mothers, as is thought, that, as all men will allow, necessarily implies the existence of their parents. You might as well affirm the existence of mules, and deny that of horses and asses. Such nonsense, Meletus, could only have been intended by you as a trial of me. You have put this into the indictment because you had nothing real of which to accuse me. But no one who has a particle of understanding will ever be convinced by you that the same man can believe in divine and superhuman things, and yet not believe that there are gods and demigods and heroes.

I have said enough in answer to the charge of Meletus: any elaborate defense is unnecessary; but as I was saying before, I certainly have many enemies, and this is what will be my destruction if I am destroyed; of that I am certain; – not Meletus, nor yet Anytus, but the envy and detraction of the world, which has been the death of many good men, and will probably be the death of many more; there is no danger of my being the last of them.

In what follows Socrates discusses why he lives a life that causes some of his fellow his fellow Athenians to turn against his. What are his reasons for living his life as he does? Are they good reasons? Be aware that Socrates knows he chooses to live a life that puts himself at great danger. Think about others in history who have done this? Ae we to admire them? Why or why not?

Someone will say: And are you not ashamed, Socrates, of a course of life which is likely to bring you to an untimely end? To him I may fairly answer: There you are mistaken: a man who is good for anything ought not to calculate the chance of living or dying; he ought only to consider whether in doing anything he is doing right or wrong – acting the part of a good man or of a bad. Whereas, according to your view, the heroes who fell at Troy were not good for much, and the son of Thetis above all, who altogether despised danger in comparison with disgrace; and when his goddess mother said to him, in his eagerness to slay Hector, that if he avenged his companion Patroclus, and slew Hector, he would die himself – "Fate," as she said, "waits upon you next after Hector"; he, hearing this, utterly despised danger and death, and instead of fearing them, feared rather to live in dishonor, and not to avenge his friend. "Let me die next," he replies, "and be avenged of my enemy, rather than abide here by the beaked ships, a scorn and a burden of the earth." Had Achilles any thought of death and danger? For wherever a man's place is, whether the place which he has chosen or that in which he has been placed by a commander, there he ought to remain in the hour of danger; he should not think of death or of anything, but of disgrace. And this, O men of Athens, is a true saying.

Strange, indeed, would be my conduct, O men of Athens, if I who, when I was ordered by the generals whom you chose to command me at Potidaea and Amphipolis and Delium, remained where they placed me, like any other man, facing death; if, I say, now, when, as I conceive and imagine, God orders me to fulfil the philosopher's mission of searching into myself and other men, I were to desert my post through fear of death, or any other fear; that would indeed be strange, and I might justly be arraigned in court for denying the existence of the gods, if I disobeyed the oracle because I was afraid of death: then I should be fancying that I was wise when I was not wise. For this fear of death is indeed the pretence of wisdom, and not real wisdom, being the appearance of knowing the unknown; since no one knows whether death, which they in their fear apprehend to be the greatest evil, may not be the greatest good. Is there not here conceit of knowledge, which is a disgraceful sort of ignorance? And this is the point in which, as I think, I am superior to men in general, and in which I might perhaps fancy myself wiser than other men, – that whereas I know but little of the world below, I do not suppose that I know: but I do know that injustice and disobedience to

a better, whether God or man, is evil and dishonorable, and I will never fear or avoid a possible good rather than a certain evil. And therefore if you let me go now, and reject the counsels of Anytus, who said that if I were not put to death I ought not to have been prosecuted, and that if I escape now, your sons will all be utterly ruined by listening to my words – if you say to me, Socrates, this time we will not mind Anytus, and will let you off, but upon one condition, that are to inquire and speculate in this way any more, and that if you are caught doing this again you shall die; – if this was the condition on which you let me go, I should reply: Men of Athens, I honor and love you; but I shall obey God rather than you, and while I have life and strength I shall never cease from the practice and teaching of philosophy, exhorting anyone whom I meet after my manner, and convincing him, saying: O my friend, why do you who are a citizen of the great and mighty and wise city of Athens, care so much about laying up the greatest amount of money and honor and reputation, and so little about wisdom and truth and the greatest improvement of the soul, which you never regard or heed at all? Are you not ashamed of this? And if the person with whom I am arguing says: Yes, but I do care; I do not depart or let him go at once; I interrogate and examine and cross-examine him, and if I think that he has no virtue, but only says that he has, I reproach him with undervaluing the greater, and overvaluing the less. And this I should say to everyone whom I meet, young and old, citizen and alien, but especially to the citizens, inasmuch as they are my brethren. For this is the command of God, as I would have you know; and I believe that to this day no greater good has ever happened in the state than my service to the God. For I do nothing but go about persuading you all, old and young alike, not to take thought for your persons and your properties, but first and chiefly to care about the greatest improvement of the soul. I tell you that virtue is not given by money, but that from virtue come money and every other good of man, public as well as private. This is my teaching, and if this is the doctrine which corrupts the youth, my influence is ruinous indeed. But if anyone says that this is not my teaching, he is speaking an untruth. Wherefore, O men of Athens, I say to you, do as Anytus bids or not as Anytus bids, and either acquit me or not; but whatever you do, know that I shall never alter my ways, not even if I have to die many times.

Men of Athens, do not interrupt, but hear me; there was an agreement between us that you should hear me out. And I think that what I am going to say will do you good: for I have something more to say, at which you may be inclined to cry out; but I beg that you will not do this. I would have you know that, if you kill such a one as I am, you will injure yourselves more than you will injure me. Meletus and Anytus will not injure me: they cannot; for it is not in the nature of things that a bad man should injure a better than himself. I do not deny that he may, perhaps, kill him, or drive him into exile, or deprive him of civil rights; and he may imagine, and others may imagine, that he is doing him a great injury: but in that I do not agree with him; for the evil of doing as Anytus is doing – of unjustly taking away another man's life – is greater far. And now, Athenians, I am not going to argue for my own sake, as you may think, but for yours, that you may not sin against the God, or lightly reject his boon by condemning me. For if you kill me you will not easily find another like me, who, if I may use such a ludicrous figure of speech, am a sort of gadfly, given to the state by the God; and the state is like a great and noble steed who is tardy in his motions owing to his very size, and requires to be stirred into life. I am that gadfly which God has given the state and all day long and in all places am always fastening upon you, arousing and persuading and reproaching you. And as you will not easily find another like me, I would advise you to spare me. I dare say that you may feel irritated at being suddenly awakened when you are caught napping; and you may think that if you were to strike me dead, as Anytus advises, which you easily might, then you would sleep on for the remainder of your lives, unless God in his care of you gives you another gadfly. And that I am given to you by God is proved by this: – that if I had been like other men, I should not have neglected all my own concerns, or patiently seen the neglect of them during all these years, and have been doing yours, coming to you individually, like a father or elder brother, exhorting you to regard virtue; this I say, would not be like human nature. And had I gained anything, or if my exhortations had been paid, there would have been some sense in that: but now, as you will perceive, not even the impudence of my accusers dares to say that I have ever exacted or sought pay

of anyone; they have no witness of that. And I have a witness of the truth of what I say; my poverty is a sufficient witness.

Someone may wonder why I go about in private, giving advice and busying myself with the concerns of others, but do not venture to come forward in public and advise the state. I will tell you the reason of this. You have often heard me speak of an oracle or sign which comes to me, and is the divinity which Meletus ridicules in the indictment. This sign I have had ever since I was a child. The sign is a voice which comes to me and always forbids me to do something which I am going to do, but never commands me to do anything, and this is what stands in the way of my being a politician. And rightly, as I think. For I am certain, O men of Athens, that if I had engaged in politics, I should have perished long ago and done no good either to you or to myself. And don't be offended at my telling you the truth: for the truth is that no man who goes to war with you or any other multitude, honestly struggling against the commission of unrighteousness and wrong in the state, will save his life; he who will really fight for the right, if he would live even for a little while, must have a private station and not a public one.

I can give you as proofs of this, not words only, but deeds, which you value more than words. Let me tell you a passage of my own life, which will prove to you that I should never have yielded to injustice from any fear of death, and that if I had not yielded I should have died at once. I will tell you a story – tasteless, perhaps, and commonplace, but nevertheless true. The only office of state which I ever held, O men of Athens, was that of senator; the tribe Antiochis, which is my tribe, had the presidency at the trial of the generals who had not taken up the bodies of the slain after the battle of Arginusae; and you proposed to try them all together, which was illegal, as you all thought afterwards; but at the time I was the only one of the Prytanes who was opposed to the illegality, and I gave my vote against you; and when the orators threatened to impeach and arrest me, and have me taken away, and you called and shouted, I made up my mind that I would run the risk, having law and justice with me, rather than take part in your injustice because I feared imprisonment and death. This happened in the days of the democracy. But when the oligarchy of the Thirty was in power, they sent for me and four others into the rotunda, and bade us bring Leon the Salaminian from Salamis, as they wanted to execute him. This was a specimen of the sort of commands which they were always giving with the view of implicating as many as possible in their crimes; and then I showed, not in words only, but in deed, that, if I may be allowed to use such an expression, I cared not a straw for death, and that my only fear was the fear of doing an unrighteous or unholy thing. For the strong arm of that oppressive power did not frighten me into doing wrong; and when we came out of the rotunda the other four went to Salamis and fetched Leon, but I went quietly home. For which I might have lost my life, had not the power of the Thirty shortly afterwards come to an end. And to this many will witness.

Now do you really imagine that I could have survived all these years, if I had led a public life, supposing that like a good man I had always supported the right and had made justice, as I ought, the first thing? No, indeed, men of Athens, neither I nor any other. But I have been always the same in all my actions, public as well as private, and never have I yielded any base compliance to those who are slanderously termed my disciples or to any other. For the truth is that I have no regular disciples: but if anyone likes to come and hear me while I am pursuing my mission, whether he be young or old, he may freely come. Nor do I converse with those who pay only, and not with those who do not pay; but anyone, whether he be rich or poor, may ask and answer me and listen to my words; and whether he turns out to be a bad man or a good one, that cannot be justly laid to my charge, as I never taught him anything. And if anyone says that he has ever learned or heard anything from me in private which all the world has not heard, I should like you to know that he is speaking an untruth.

But I shall be asked, Why do people delight in continually conversing with you? I have told you already, Athenians, the whole truth about this: they like to hear the cross-examination of the pretenders to wisdom;

there is amusement in this. And this is a duty which the God has imposed upon me, as I am assured by oracles, visions, and in every sort of way in which the will of divine power was ever signified to anyone. This is true, O Athenians; or, if not true, would be soon refuted. For if I am really corrupting the youth, and have corrupted some of them already, those of them who have grown up and have become sensible that I gave them bad advice in the days of their youth should come forward as accusers and take their revenge; and if they do not like to come themselves, some of their relatives, fathers, brothers, or other kinsmen, should say what evil their families suffered at my hands. Now is their time. Many of them I see in the court. There is Crito, who is of the same age and of the same deme with myself; and there is Critobulus his son, whom I also see. Then again there is Lysanias of Sphettus, who is the father of Aeschines – he is present; and also there is Antiphon of Cephisus, who is the father of Epignes; and there are the brothers of several who have associated with me. There is Nicostratus the son of Theosdotides, and the brother of Theodotus (now Theodotus himself is dead, and therefore he, at any rate, will not seek to stop him); and there is Paralus the son of Demodocus, who had a brother Theages; and Adeimantus the son of Ariston, whose brother Plato is present; and Aeantodorus, who is the brother of Apollodorus, whom I also see. I might mention a great many others, any of whom Meletus should have produced as witnesses in the course of his speech; and let him still produce them, if he has forgotten – I will make way for him. And let him say, if he has any testimony of the sort which he can produce. Nay, Athenians, the very opposite is the truth. For all these are ready to witness on behalf of the corrupter, of the destroyer of their kindred, as Meletus and Anytus call me; not the corrupted youth only – there might have been a motive for that – but their uncorrupted elder relatives. Why should they too support me with their testimony? Why, indeed, except for the sake of truth and justice, and because they know that I am speaking the truth, and that Meletus is lying.

Well, Athenians, this and the like of this is nearly all the defense which I have to offer. Yet a word more. Perhaps there may be someone who is offended at me, when he calls to mind how he himself, on a similar or even a less serious occasion, had recourse to prayers and supplications with many tears, and how he produced his children in court, which was a moving spectacle, together with a posse of his relations and friends; whereas I, who am probably in danger of my life, will do none of these things. Perhaps this may come into his mind, and he may be set against me, and vote in anger because he is displeased at this. Now if there be such a person among you, which I am far from affirming, I may fairly reply to him: My friend, I am a man, and like other men, a creature of flesh and blood, and not of wood or stone, as Homer says; and I have a family, yes, and sons. O Athenians, three in number, one of whom is growing up, and the two others are still young; and yet I will not bring any of them hither in order to petition you for an acquittal. And why not? Not from any self-will or disregard of you. Whether I am or am not afraid of death is another question, of which I will not now speak. But my reason simply is that I feel such conduct to be discreditable to myself, and you, and the whole state. One who has reached my years, and who has a name for wisdom, whether deserved or not, ought not to debase himself. At any rate, the world has decided that Socrates is in some way superior to other men. And if those among you who are said to be superior in wisdom and courage, and any other virtue, demean themselves in this way, how shameful is their conduct! I have seen men of reputation, when they have been condemned, behaving in the strangest manner: they seemed to fancy that they were going to suffer something dreadful if they died, and that they could be immortal if you only allowed them to live; and I think that they were a dishonor to the state, and that any stranger coming in would say of them that the most eminent men of Athens, to whom the Athenians themselves give honor and command, are no better than women. And I say that these things ought not to be done by those of us who are of reputation; and if they are done, you ought not to permit them; you ought rather to show that you are more inclined to condemn, not the man who is quiet, but the man who gets up a doleful scene, and makes the city ridiculous.

But, setting aside the question of dishonor, there seems to be something wrong in petitioning a judge, and thus procuring an acquittal instead of informing and convincing him. For his duty is, not to make a

present of justice, but to give judgment; and he has sworn that he will judge according to the laws, and not according to his own good pleasure; and neither he nor we should get into the habit of perjuring ourselves – there can be no piety in that. Do not then require me to do what I consider dishonorable and impious and wrong, especially now, when I am being tried for impiety on the indictment of Meletus. For if, O men of Athens, by force of persuasion and entreaty, I could overpower your oaths, then I should be teaching you to believe that there are no gods, and convict myself, in my own defense, of not believing in them. But that is not the case; for I do believe that there are gods, and in a far higher sense than that in which any of my accusers believe in them. And to you and to God I commit my cause, to be determined by you as is best for you and me.

The jury finds Socrates guilty.

Socrates' Proposal for his Sentence

When someone was put on trial in ancient Athens the accusers were asked to propose a sanction if the person is convicted. If the person is convicted, they have the right to propose a counter sentence. What is the sanction proposed against Socrates? What is his response? What is his reason for this response?

There are many reasons why I am not grieved, O men of Athens, at the vote of condemnation. I expected it, and am only surprised that the votes are so nearly equal; for I had thought that the majority against me would have been far larger; but now, had thirty votes gone over to the other side, I should have been acquitted. And I may say that I have escaped Meletus. And I may say more; for without the assistance of Anytus and Lycon, he would not have had a fifth part of the votes, as the law requires, in which case he would have incurred a fine of a thousand drachmae, as is evident.

And so he proposes death as the penalty. And what shall I propose on my part, O men of Athens? Clearly that which is my due. And what is that which I ought to pay or to receive? What shall be done to the man who has never had the wit to be idle during his whole life; but has been careless of what the many care about – wealth, and family interests, and military offices, and speaking in the assembly, and magistracies, and plots, and parties. Reflecting that I was really too honest a man to follow in this way and live, I did not go where I could do no good to you or to myself; but where I could do the greatest good privately to everyone of you, thither I went, and sought to persuade every man among you that he must look to himself, and seek virtue and wisdom before he looks to his private interests, and look to the state before he looks to the interests of the state; and that this should be the order which he observes in all his actions. What shall be done to such a one? Doubtless some good thing, O men of Athens, if he has his reward; and the good should be of a kind suitable to him. What would be a reward suitable to a poor man who is your benefactor, who desires leisure that he may instruct you? There can be no more fitting reward than maintenance in the Prytaneum, O men of Athens, a reward which he deserves far more than the citizen who has won the prize at Olympia in the horse or chariot race, whether the chariots were drawn by two horses or by many. For I am in want, and he has enough; and he only gives you the appearance of happiness, and I give you the reality. And if I am to estimate the penalty justly, I say that maintenance in the Prytaneum is the just return.

Perhaps you may think that I am braving you in saying this, as in what I said before about the tears and prayers. But that is not the case. I speak rather because I am convinced that I never intentionally wronged anyone, although I cannot convince you of that – for we have had a short conversation only; but if there were a law at Athens, such as there is in other cities, that a capital cause should not be decided in one day, then I believe that I should have convinced you; but now the time is too short. I cannot in a moment refute

great slanders; and, as I am convinced that I never wronged another, I will assuredly not wrong myself. I will not say of myself that I deserve any evil, or propose any penalty. Why should I? Because I am afraid of the penalty of death which Meletus proposes? When I do not know whether death is a good or an evil, why should I propose a penalty which would certainly be an evil? Shall I say imprisonment? And why should I live in prison, and be the slave of the magistrates of the year – of the Eleven? Or shall the penalty be a fine, and imprisonment until the fine is paid? There is the same objection. I should have to lie in prison, for money I have none, and I cannot pay. And if I say exile (and this may possibly be the penalty which you will affix), I must indeed be blinded by the love of life if I were to consider that when you, who are my own citizens, cannot endure my discourses and words, and have found them so grievous and odious that you would fain have done with them, others are likely to endure me. No, indeed, men of Athens, that is not very likely. And what a life should I lead, at my age, wandering from city to city, living in ever-changing exile, and always being driven out! For I am quite sure that into whatever place I go, as here so also there, the young men will come to me; and if I drive them away, their elders will drive me out at their desire: and if I let them come, their fathers and friends will drive me out for their sakes.

Someone will say: Yes, Socrates, but cannot you hold your tongue, and then you may go into a foreign city, and no one will interfere with you? Now I have great difficulty in making you understand my answer to this. For if I tell you that this would be a disobedience to a divine command, and therefore that I cannot hold my tongue, you will not believe that I am serious; and if I say again that the greatest good of man is daily to converse about virtue, and all that concerning which you hear me examining myself and others, and that the life which is unexamined is not worth living – that you are still less likely to believe. And yet what I say is true, although a thing of which it is hard for me to persuade you. Moreover, I am not accustomed to think that I deserve any punishment. Had I money I might have proposed to give you what I had, and have been none the worse. But you see that I have none, and can only ask you to proportion the fine to my means. However, I think that I could afford a minae, and therefore I propose that penalty; Plato, Crito, Critobulus, and Apollodorus, my friends here, bid me say thirty minae, and they will be the sureties. Well then, say thirty minae, let that be the penalty; for that they will be ample security to you.

The jury condemns Socrates to death.

Socrates' Comments on his Sentence

Not much time will be gained, O Athenians, in return for the evil name which you will get from the detractors of the city, who will say that you killed Socrates, a wise man; for they will call me wise even although I am not wise when they want to reproach you. If you had waited a little while, your desire would have been fulfilled in the course of nature. For I am far advanced in years, as you may perceive, and not far from death. I am speaking now only to those of you who have condemned me to death. And I have another thing to say to them: You think that I was convicted through deficiency of words – I mean, that if I had thought fit to leave nothing undone, nothing unsaid, I might have gained an acquittal. Not so; the deficiency which led to my conviction was not of words – certainly not. But I had not the boldness or impudence or inclination to address you as you would have liked me to address you, weeping and wailing and lamenting, and saying and doing many things which you have been accustomed to hear from others, and which, as I say, are unworthy of me. But I thought that I ought not to do anything common or mean in the hour of danger: nor do I now repent of the manner of my defence, and I would rather die having spoken after my manner, than speak in your manner and live. For neither in war nor yet at law ought any man to use every way of escaping death. For often in battle there is no doubt that if a man will throw away his arms, and fall on his knees before his pursuers, he may escape death; and in other dangers there are

other ways of escaping death, if a man is willing to say and do anything. The difficulty, my friends, is not in avoiding death, but in avoiding unrighteousness; for that runs faster than death. I am old and move slowly, and the slower runner has overtaken me, and my accusers are keen and quick, and the faster runner, who is unrighteousness, has overtaken them. And now I depart hence condemned by you to suffer the penalty of death, and they, too, go their ways condemned by the truth to suffer the penalty of villainy and wrong; and I must abide by my award – let them abide by theirs. I suppose that these things may be regarded as fated, – and I think that they are well.

And now, O men who have condemned me, I would fain prophesy to you; for I am about to die, and that is the hour in which men are gifted with prophetic power. And I prophesy to you who are my murderers, that immediately after my death punishment far heavier than you have inflicted on me will surely await you. Me you have killed because you wanted to escape the accuser, and not to give an account of your lives. But that will not be as you suppose: far otherwise. For I say that there will be more accusers of you than there are now; accusers whom hitherto I have restrained: and as they are younger they will be more severe with you, and you will be more offended at them. For if you think that by killing men you can avoid the accuser censuring your lives, you are mistaken; that is not a way of escape which is either possible or honorable; the easiest and noblest way is not to be crushing others, but to be improving yourselves. This is the prophecy which I utter before my departure, to the judges who have condemned me.

Friends, who would have acquitted me, I would like also to talk with you about this thing which has happened, while the magistrates are busy, and before I go to the place at which I must die. Stay then awhile, for we may as well talk with one another while there is time. You are my friends, and I should like to show you the meaning of this event which has happened to me. O my judges – for you I may truly call judges – I should like to tell you of a wonderful circumstance. Hitherto the familiar oracle within me has constantly been in the habit of opposing me even about trifles, if I was going to make a slip or error about anything; and now as you see there has come upon me that which may be thought, and is generally believed to be, the last and worst evil. But the oracle made no sign of opposition, either as I was leaving my house and going out in the morning, or when I was going up into this court, or while I was speaking, at anything which I was going to say; and yet I have often been stopped in the middle of a speech; but now in nothing I either said or did touching this matter has the oracle opposed me. What do I take to be the explanation of this? I will tell you. I regard this as a proof that what has happened to me is a good, and that those of us who think that death is an evil are in error. This is a great proof to me of what I am saying, for the customary sign would surely have opposed me had I been going to evil and not to good.

Let us reflect in another way, and we shall see that there is great reason to hope that death is a good, for one of two things: – either death is a state of nothingness and utter unconsciousness, or, as men say, there is a change and migration of the soul from this world to another. Now if you suppose that there is no consciousness, but a sleep like the sleep of him who is undisturbed even by the sight of dreams, death will be an unspeakable gain. For if a person were to select the night in which his sleep was undisturbed even by dreams, and were to compare with this the other days and nights of his life, and then were to tell us how many days and nights he had passed in the course of his life better and more pleasantly than this one, I think that any man, I will not say a private man, but even the great king, will not find many such days or nights, when compared with the others. Now if death is like this, I say that to die is gain; for eternity is then only a single night. But if death is the journey to another place, and there, as men say, all the dead are, what good, O my friends and judges, can be greater than this? If indeed when the pilgrim arrives in the world below, he is delivered from the professors of justice in this world, and finds the true judges who are said to give judgment there, Minos and Rhadamanthus and Aeacus and Triptolemus, and other sons of God who were righteous in their own life, that pilgrimage will be worth making. What would not a man give if he might converse with Orpheus and Musaeus and Hesiod and Homer? Nay, if this be true, let me die again

and again. I, too, shall have a wonderful interest in a place where I can converse with Palamedes, and Ajax the son of Telamon, and other heroes of old, who have suffered death through an unjust judgment; and there will be no small pleasure, as I think, in comparing my own sufferings with theirs. Above all, I shall be able to continue my search into true and false knowledge; as in this world, so also in that; I shall find out who is wise, and who pretends to be wise, and is not. What would not a man give, O judges, to be able to examine the leader of the great Trojan expedition; or Odysseus or Sisyphus, or numberless others, men and women too! What infinite delight would there be in conversing with them and asking them questions! For in that world they do not put a man to death for this; certainly not. For besides being happier in that world than in this, they will be immortal, if what is said is true.

Wherefore, O judges, be of good cheer about death, and know this of a truth – that no evil can happen to a good man, either in life or after death. He and his are not neglected by the gods; nor has my own approaching end happened by mere chance. But I see clearly that to die and be released was better for me; and therefore the oracle gave no sign. For which reason also, I am not angry with my accusers, or my condemners; they have done me no harm, although neither of them meant to do me any good; and for this I may gently blame them.

Still I have a favor to ask of them. When my sons are grown up, I would ask you, O my friends, to punish them; and I would have you trouble them, as I have troubled you, if they seem to care about riches, or anything, more than about virtue; or if they pretend to be something when they are really nothing, – then reprove them, as I have reproved you, for not caring about that for which they ought to care, and thinking that they are something when they are really nothing. And if you do this, I and my sons will have received justice at your hands.

The hour of departure has arrived, and we go our ways – I to die, and you to live. Which is better God only knows.

After, (and only after!) you have read the Apology at least twice, watch this video:

A YouTube element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: https://whatisphilosophy.pressbooks.sunycreate.cloud/?p=88

Exercises

2. The video is a dramatization of the dialogue. In what ways is it different from the actual dialogue? Does the dramatization present a different philosophical perspective than the dialogue itself?

II. THE NATURE OF REALITY AND A WELL-LIVED LIFE

A. Eros and Appearance versus Reality: Plato's Symposium

1. In praise of eros

Plato's *Symposium* is a **Platonic dialogue** (presenting the philosophical perspective of Plato) that recounts a **fictional symposium**[1] attended by some of the leading political and literary figures of Athens in 416 BCE. Its date of composition is not known and there is some controversy as to precisely where it lies in the sequence of Plato's dialogues. Generally, it is believed to have been written sometime between 485-470 BCE. We know the fictional dialogue took place in **416 BCE because it is presented as celebrating poet Agathon's first victory in the dramatic competition of the Dionysia of 416 BCE**.

Map image by Abu America, CC BY-SA.

1. A fiction is an invention or fabrication. A "fictional symposium" is a symposium that did not occur. The symposium recounted in Plato's *Symposium* did not, insofar as we know, occur. However, all the attendees were people who lived in Athens in 416 B.C.E. are portrayed true to character by Plato.

The dialogue takes place in Athens, the great city-state of Classical Greece. Athens, at this time, is in the process of reengaging Sparta in what we now call the Peloponnesian War (431-404 BCE). In 421 BCE the Peace of Nicias had been agreed between Sparta and its allies and Athens. However, in 418 BCE conflict broke out between the Sparta and Argos. A group of hawkish Athenians, including the influential **Alcibiades** (who is an important character In the *Symposium)*, persuaded the city to side with Argos. Athens and Argos were defeated by the Spartans. This defeat by the Spartans led Athens to attempt to rebuild its empire so that Athens has the resources to defeat Sparta in future wars. The *Symposium* dialogue occurs the year prior to Alcibiades persuading the Athenians that they should launch what turns out to be a disastrous expedition to the Syracuse in Sicily. Just before the expedition left Athens, a group of men rampaged through the city mutilating the statues of the God Hermes (Herms) that lined the streets of the city. They smashed the genitals off the statues of god.

Photo by QuartierLatin1968, CC BY-SA.

Although it is unknown who did this, the peace party in Athens blamed it on Alcibiades and his friends who included **Phaedrus** and **Eryximachus** (other attendees at the Symposium). There are those who believe the peace party itself committed this desecration so as throw the blame on Alcibiades. Alcibiades, one of the three generals of the expedition, was arrested for this desecration before the Athenian fleet arrived in Sicily. While being brought back to Athens, Alcibiades and his shipmates fled and deserted Athens for Sparta. In Sicily, the remaining Athenian naval force suffered a complete defeat, and its general was captured s and executed.

Those at Plato's Academy who would have read or listened to the *Symposium* would have been well aware of this history. In composing the *Symposium*, Plato was carefully placing the dialogue at this critically important turning point in Athenian history and featuring characters who were caught up in the drama.

Symposia were an important part of the social life of male Athenian citizens. The word means, literally, "drinking together." Symposia were ritualized events where male Athenians would gather with friends to celebrate important occasions. Essentially, symposia were drinking parties. These drinking parties were constructed as a sort of alternative society where men, usually of the Athenian elite, could be completely comfortable with other men and conduct themselves as they judged best without regard to external rules. Each symposium would be governed by a *Symposiarchos* a "symposium-ruler" who would preside over the symposium and make sure that everyone at the

symposium followed the agreed upon rules of this alternate society. In Plato's *Symposium* Eryximachus is designated as the *Symposiarchos*.

Banquet scene from a Temple of Athena (6th century BC). Sculptor Unknown. Photo by Jastrow, public domain.

As part of the rule making of this alternative society, the attendees would decide about the nature of the entertainment. Although the attendees would be all men (if the host had a wife or children they would be away in the women's quarters of the house) they would often have female *hetairai* (a kind of prostitute who was also an entertainer) or other performers entertain them. The men would also participate in drinking games or other sorts of competition at symposia.

As can be seen from the reproduction of the relief above, the men attending a symposium would recline on benches rather than sit at table. Servants would pour wine for them and bring them tidbits of food. Sometimes both the drinking and the drinking games would become quite exuberant.

Here is an image from a painting on a drinking cup of an Athenian slave attending to a symposiast who has been over enthusiastic in his drinking and in vomiting into a vessel.

A drunk man vomiting, while a young slave is holding his forehead. Brygos Painter, 500-470 B.C. National Museum of Denmark. Picture by Stefano Bolognini, CC-BY-SA.

Here is an image of a symposiast flicking wine lees at a target as part of a drinking game called "*Kottabos*." In this game symposiasts would flick the dregs from the wine they were drinking at targets in the room. This image was painted on a drinking cup, in this case a *kylix* or a two-handed cup for drinking wine.

Young man playing the kottabos. Red-figure kylix, ca. 510 B.C. Photo by Μαρσύας, CC-BY-SA.

This is a kylix.

Silver kylix with Helen and Hermes, ca. 420 B.C., part of the Vassil Bojkov collection, Sofia, Bulgaria. Photo by Gorgonchica, CC BY-SA.

As you will read, compared to the rowdy affairs that symposia often were, the symposium of the *Symposium* is, mostly, a relatively sober affair. Here the chief activity of the *Symposium* a competitive presentation of praise-speeches or *encomia*[2] on both the god *Eros* and the feeling, *eros*, associated with that god.[3] *Eros* is almost always translated into the English word "love." This, however, is a less than perfect translation. "*Eros*" does not mean "love." To understand the difference, first think about the English word "erotic" which refers to sexual desire or arousal. Also, think about the many ways the word "love" is used today. There is, of course, romantic love. This is often strong affection colored with erotic desire. People often feel sexual desire for those they are romantically in love with. There is also the love one feels for friends. This love often lacks the erotic element. Sometimes we will say "I love you as a friend." This means that you do not feel romantic or erotic love for someone, but you do have strong affection for them or value them greatly.

Exercises

1. Think here about how romantic love, friendship and erotic attraction relate to each other in your own life and the lives of those you know. Is there a sharp distinction between each of these? Or do they sometime merge into each other? How do feelings like jealousy and possession play into such feelings?

2. This is Latin and is derived from the Greek *enkōmion*
3. In English translation the upper case "E" is used to indicate the god *Eros* and the lower the case the feeing.

You may love your family and, while this is usually non-erotic love, it is not the same love as you feel for your friends. Also, you may say you love a pet or some prized possession or even a class. Hopefully, you will come to love philosophy. I love philosophy and I love my job as a philosophy professor, but this is a different kind of love than that which I feel for my mother.

"Love" is, I hope you see now, a conceptually complex and rich term. We use a single word to designate many different feelings and concepts.

Exercises

2. Is there anything that ties these different feelings and concepts together? If so, what is it? Is there a single core "love idea"? Or are we merely lumping an assortment of different feelings and concepts under one word?

Eros, like love, is a complex and expansive concept. It overlaps with the love concept, but there is also significant divergence in signification. Both *eros* and love are strongly linked to desire. To desire is to want. When you love someone or something you usually want it in the way that is appropriate to the kind of love that it is. For the ancient Athenians, the wanting of *eros* was to want to possess. *Eros* places a strong emphasis on what we still call "erotic" or "sexual" desire. *Eros*, though, is not mere lust.[4] The speeches in the *Symposium* should make this clearer. Pay attention to how each of the speeches in praise of *eros* uses and develops the concept of *eros* in a variety of different ways. I will ask you to reflect on this.

There are other Ancient Greek words that can be translated as "love." These include:

Philia, which is the more inclusive term and does not necessarily have erotic connotations and can include non-erotic "friendship." In the *Symposium philia* is sometimes used to refer to the relation that exists between the lover and the beloved. Throughout the *Symposium* be aware of *philo – sophia*. In the speech of Socrates it is claimed that *eros* when pursued properly should lead to *philo – Sophia*.

Storgē, emphasizes the affectionate dimension of love. It is often used to define the bonds between parents and children.

Agápe, is also used at times to refer to the love felt towards a spouse or one's children. This is a love-concept that becomes important in Greek influenced Christian thought. It contains within it charitable love such as the Christian God might have towards creation.

Throughout the semester we will be reading works translated from other languages into English. You should be aware of and reflect upon the way in which different languages organize the conceptual landscape in different ways. These different concepts can overlap with the concepts we use in contemporary American

4. The Greek word that best translates as our "lust" is "*epithumia*," but this word also does not translate precisely to our "lust" as it can also mean "enthusiastic desire." To desire a particular object is epithy and to want something is bolesthai. Here again, there are similarities with how we use contemporary English. Do you ever talk about "lusting" after something you enthusiastically desire? Do such similarities in how language is used point to human commonalities?

English. They also, though, have different detailed connotations. Close attention to this can be a part of an education as to how to conceptualize the world in a wide variety of ways.

2. Introductory Sections and the Speech of Phaedrus

This first section from Plato's *Symposium* consists of two introductory sections and then the first of the *Symposium*'s *encomia* of *eros*, the speech of Phaedrus. The two introductory sections are important in guiding the reader as to how to interpret the rest of the text.

The *Symposium* begins with a conversation between a character named Apollodorus and a friend ("companion" in the Jowett translation) who is never named. The friend has asked Apollodorus about a symposium attended by Socrates and other Athenian luminaries where the topic of the conversation was *eros*. Apollodorus recounts to the friend that another friend, one "Glaucon," has also recently asked about this *Symposium*. Apollodorus explains that he in fact did not attend the *Symposium*, that it happened many years ago, and he heard of it from another person, Aristodemus, who did attend. Both Apollodorus and Aristodemus are devotes of Socrates and lovers of wisdom in the sense that Socrates implores other Athenians to be. However, you should pay attention to how they are portrayed in the *Symposium*. Are they, perhaps, too much lovers of Socrates and not enough lovers of wisdom? If they are, do they misunderstand the message of eros as it is recounted in the *Symposium*?

The second introductory section is narrated by Aristodemus. Or, rather, we read what Plato wrote about what Apollodorus tells his unnamed friend he told to Glaucon about what Aristodemus told him and that that he (Apollodorus) checked with Socrates! ***Why does Plato make this introduction so complicated?As the autho, what is he trying to communicate to the reader with this complexity?*** In this second introductory section, Aristodemus tells the reader how he happened to join Socrates on the way to Agathon's symposium. There are number of interesting narrative twists here. Pay close attention as you read! Also, it is important to know that the Greek word for "good" is *Agathos*, thus Socrates and, at Socrates' invitation, Aristodemus are going to "goodman's" house. Also, observe how Aristodemus remarks that "he met Socrates fresh from the bath and sandaled; and as the sight of the sandals was unusual, he asked him whither he was going that he had been converted into such a beau." The reason Aristodemus remarks on this is that such appearence is very unusual for Socrates. In general, Athenian men prided themselves on their physical appearance, they wore sandals, scents and dressed their hair in elaborate ways. Socrates, deliberately not conforming to the status quo, was almost always plainly dressed and went around barefoot. Aristodemus, following Socrates' example, is himself barefoot, plainly dressed, and unwashed. Agathon is going to goodman's house and party very much underdressed whereas his idol, Socrates, is looking, for Socrates, very pretty indeed!

After Socrates arrives at the Agathon's house(and be cognizant as to why Socrates arrives late), there is joking banter between Socrates and Agathon. What is this about? Is there a bit of erotic innuendo here? And why, once Socrates settles in, do they decide to drink in moderation? What do they decide to do at this symposium? Why does Plato have them send the "flute-girl" away? And,note that Socrates, who elsewhere says that his wisdom lies in his knowing that he knows nothing, here says he "understand nothing but matters of love." This will prove to be a most interesting gathering.

Then, after all this folderol, comes the first speech, the speech of Phaedrus. Pay attention to both the form and the content of Phaedrus' speech. What does he say? How does he say it?

The first time through, try to read Plato's *Symposium* as you would read a story, not as you would read a textbook or a work of philosophy. Use your imagination and try to picture what is being narrated.

You should also read each assignment from Plato's *Symposium* at least twice. Once before we go over in class, to know what we are talking about, and once after. Ideally you will read it twice before class. The first time to follow the story and the second to pay attention to and reflect on the details.

Symposium

Translated by Benjamin Jowett (with minor alterations)

Note: The translation of the *Symposium* here is that of Benjamin Jowett. It is copied from http://classics.mit.edu/Plato/symposium.html.

First introductory conversation:

Concerning the things about which you ask to be informed I believe that I am not ill-prepared with an answer. For the day before yesterday I was coming from my own home at Phalerum to the city, and one of my acquaintance, who had caught a sight of me from behind, calling out playfully in the distance, said: Apollodorus, O thou Phalerian (Probably a play of words on (Greek), 'bald-headed.') man, halt! So I did as I was bid; and then he said, I was looking for you, Apollodorus, only just now, that I might ask you about the speeches in praise of love, which were delivered by Socrates, Alcibiades, and others, at Agathon's supper. Phoenix, the son of Philip, told another person who told me of them; his narrative was very indistinct, but he said that you knew, and I wish that you would give me an account of them. Who, if not you, should be the reporter of the words of your friend? And first tell me, he said, were you present at this meeting?

Your informant, Glaucon, I said, must have been very indistinct indeed, if you imagine that the occasion was recent; or that I could have been of the party.

Why, yes, he replied, I thought so.

Impossible, I said. Are you ignorant that for many years Agathon has not resided at Athens; and not three have elapsed since I became acquainted with Socrates, and have made it my daily business to know all that he says and does. There was a time when I was running about the world, fancying myself to be well employed, but I was really a most wretched being, no better than you are now. I thought that I ought to do anything rather than be a philosopher.

Well, he said, jesting apart, tell me when the meeting occurred.

In our boyhood, I replied, when Agathon won the prize with his first tragedy, on the day after that on which he and his chorus offered the sacrifice of victory.

Then it must have been a long while ago, he said; and who told you—did Socrates?

No indeed, I replied, but the same person who told Phoenix;—he was a little fellow, who never wore any shoes, Aristodemus, of the deme of Cydathenaeum. He had been at Agathon's feast; and I think that in those days there was no one who was a more devoted admirer of Socrates. Moreover, I have asked Socrates about the truth of some parts of his narrative, and he confirmed them. Then, said Glaucon, let us have the tale over again; is not the road to Athens just made for conversation? And so we walked, and talked of the discourses on love; and therefore, as I said at first, I am not ill-prepared to comply with your request, and will have another rehearsal of them if you like. For to speak or to hear others speak of philosophy always gives me the greatest pleasure, to say nothing of the profit. But when I hear another strain, especially that of you rich men and traders, such conversation displeases me; and I pity you who are my companions, because you think that you are doing something when in reality you are doing nothing. And I dare say that you pity

me in return, whom you regard as an unhappy creature, and very probably you are right. But I certainly know of you what you only think of me—there is the difference.

COMPANION: I see, Apollodorus, that you are just the same—always speaking evil of yourself, and of others; and I do believe that you pity all mankind, with the exception of Socrates, yourself first of all, true in this to your old name, which, however deserved, I know not how you acquired, of Apollodorus the madman; for you are always raging against yourself and everybody but Socrates.

APOLLODORUS: Yes, friend, and the reason why I am said to be mad, and out of my wits, is just because I have these notions of myself and you; no other evidence is required.

COMPANION: No more of that, Apollodorus; but let me renew my request that you would repeat the conversation.

APOLLODORUS: Well, the tale of love was on this wise:—But perhaps I had better begin at the beginning, and endeavour to give you the exact words of Aristodemus:

Second introductory conversation:

He said that he met Socrates fresh from the bath and sandalled; and as the sight of the sandals was unusual, he asked him whither he was going that he had been converted into such a beau:

To a banquet at Agathon's, Socrates replied, whose invitation to his sacrifice of victory I refused yesterday, fearing a crowd, but promising that I would come to-day instead; and so I have put on my finery, because he is such a fine man. What say you to going with me unasked?

I will do as you bid me, I replied.

Follow then, he said, and let us demolish the proverb:

'To the feasts of inferior men the good unbidden go;' instead of which our proverb will run:

'To the feasts of the good the good unbidden go;' and this alteration may be supported by the authority of Homer himself, who not only demolishes but literally outrages the proverb. For, after picturing Agamemnon as the most valiant of men, he makes Menelaus, who is but a fainthearted warrior, come unbidden (Iliad) to the banquet of Agamemnon, who is feasting and offering sacrifices, not the better to the worse, but the worse to the better.

I rather fear, Socrates, said Aristodemus, lest this may still be my case; and that, like Menelaus in Homer, I shall be the inferior person, who

'To the feasts of the wise unbidden goes.' But I shall say that I was bidden of you, and then you will have to make an excuse.

'Two going together,' he replied, in Homeric fashion, one or other of them may invent an excuse by the way.

This was the style of their conversation as they went along. Socrates dropped behind in a fit of abstraction, and desired Aristodemus, who was waiting, to go on before him. When he reached the house of Agathon he found the doors wide open, and a comical thing happened. A servant coming out met him, and led him at once into the banqueting-hall in which the guests were reclining, for the banquet was about to begin. Welcome, Aristodemus, said Agathon, as soon as he appeared—you are just in time to sup with us; if you come on any other matter put it off, and make one of us, as I was looking for you yesterday and meant to have asked you, if I could have found you. But what have you done with Socrates?

I turned round, but Socrates was nowhere to be seen; and I had to explain that he had been with me a moment before, and that I came by his invitation to the supper.

You were quite right in coming, said Agathon; but where is he himself?

He was behind me just now, as I entered, he said, and I cannot think what has become of him.

Go and look for him, boy, said Agathon, and bring him in; and do you, Aristodemus, meanwhile take the place by Eryximachus.

The servant then assisted him to wash, and he lay down, and presently another servant came in and reported that our friend Socrates had retired into the portico of the neighbouring house. 'There he is fixed,' said he, 'and when I call to him he will not stir.'

How strange, said Agathon; then you must call him again, and keep calling him.

Let him alone, said my informant; he has a way of stopping anywhere and losing himself without any reason. I believe that he will soon appear; do not therefore disturb him.

Well, if you think so, I will leave him, said Agathon. And then, turning to the servants, he added, 'Let us have supper without waiting for him. Serve up whatever you please, for there is no one to give you orders; hitherto I have never left you to yourselves. But on this occasion imagine that you are our hosts, and that I and the company are your guests; treat us well, and then we shall commend you.' After this, supper was served, but still no Socrates; and during the meal Agathon several times expressed a wish to send for him, but Aristodemus objected; and at last when the feast was about half over—for the fit, as usual, was not of long duration—Socrates entered. Agathon, who was reclining alone at the end of the table, begged that he would take the place next to him; that 'I may touch you,' he said, 'and have the benefit of that wise thought which came into your mind in the portico, and is now in your possession; for I am certain that you would not have come away until you had found what you sought.'

How I wish, said Socrates, taking his place as he was desired, that wisdom could be infused by touch, out of the fuller into the emptier man, as water runs through wool out of a fuller cup into an emptier one; if that were so, how greatly should I value the privilege of reclining at your side! For you would have filled me full with a stream of wisdom plenteous and fair; whereas my own is of a very mean and questionable sort, no better than a dream. But yours is bright and full of promise, and was manifested forth in all the splendour of youth the day before yesterday, in the presence of more than thirty thousand Hellenes.

You are mocking, Socrates, said Agathon, and ere long you and I will have to determine who bears off the palm of wisdom—of this Dionysus shall be the judge; but at present you are better occupied with supper.

Socrates took his place on the couch, and supped with the rest; and then libations were offered, and after a hymn had been sung to the god, and there had been the usual ceremonies, they were about to commence drinking, when Pausanias said, And now, my friends, how can we drink with least injury to ourselves? I can assure you that I feel severely the effect of yesterday's potations, and must have time to recover; and I suspect that most of you are in the same predicament, for you were of the party yesterday. Consider then: How can the drinking be made easiest?

I entirely agree, said Aristophanes, that we should, by all means, avoid hard drinking, for I was myself one of those who were yesterday drowned in drink.

I think that you are right, said Eryximachus, the son of Acumenus; but I should still like to hear one other person speak: Is Agathon able to drink hard?

I am not equal to it, said Agathon.

Then, said Eryximachus, the weak heads like myself, Aristodemus, Phaedrus, and others who never can drink, are fortunate in finding that the stronger ones are not in a drinking mood. (I do not include Socrates, who is able either to drink or to abstain, and will not mind, whichever we do.) Well, as of none of the company seem disposed to drink much, I may be forgiven for saying, as a physician, that drinking deep is a bad practice, which I never follow, if I can help, and certainly do not recommend to another, least of all to any one who still feels the effects of yesterday's carouse.

I always do what you advise, and especially what you prescribe as a physician, rejoined Phaedrus the Myrrhinusian, and the rest of the company, if they are wise, will do the same.

It was agreed that drinking was not to be the order of the day, but that they were all to drink only so much as they pleased.

Then, said Eryximachus, as you are all agreed that drinking is to be voluntary, and that there is to be no compulsion, I move, in the next place, that the flute-girl, who has just made her appearance, be told to go away and play to herself, or, if she likes, to the women who are within (compare Prot.). To-day let us have conversation instead; and, if you will allow me, I will tell you what sort of conversation. This proposal having been accepted, Eryximachus proceeded as follows:—

I will begin, he said, after the manner of Melanippe in Euripides,

'Not mine the word' which I am about to speak, but that of Phaedrus. For often he says to me in an indignant tone:—'What a strange thing it is, Eryximachus, that, whereas other gods have poems and hymns made in their honour, the great and glorious god, Love, has no encomiast among all the poets who are so many. There are the worthy sophists too—the excellent Prodicus for example, who have descanted in prose on the virtues of Heracles and other heroes; and, what is still more extraordinary, I have met with a philosophical work in which the utility of salt has been made the theme of an eloquent discourse; and many other like things have had a like honour bestowed upon them. And only to think that there should have been an eager interest created about them, and yet that to this day no one has ever dared worthily to hymn Love's praises! So entirely has this great deity been neglected.' Now in this Phaedrus seems to me to be quite right, and therefore I want to offer him a contribution; also I think that at the present moment we who are here assembled cannot do better than honour the god Love. If you agree with me, there will be no lack of conversation; for I mean to propose that each of us in turn, going from left to right, shall make a speech in honour of Love. Let him give us the best which he can; and Phaedrus, because he is sitting first on the left hand, and because he is the father of the thought, shall begin.

No one will vote against you, Eryximachus, said Socrates. How can I oppose your motion, who profess to understand nothing but matters of love; nor, I presume, will Agathon and Pausanias; and there can be no doubt of Aristophanes, whose whole concern is with Dionysus and Aphrodite; nor will any one disagree of those whom I see around me. The proposal, as I am aware, may seem rather hard upon us whose place is last; but we shall be contented if we hear some good speeches first. Let Phaedrus begin the praise of Love, and good luck to him. All the company expressed their assent, and desired him to do as Socrates bade him.

Aristodemus did not recollect all that was said, nor do I recollect all that he related to me; but I will tell you what I thought most worthy of remembrance, and what the chief speakers said.

The speech of Phaedrus:

Phaedrus began by affirming that Love is a mighty god, and wonderful among gods and men, but especially wonderful in his birth. For he is the eldest of the gods, which is an honour to him; and a proof of

his claim to this honour is, that of his parents there is no memorial; neither poet nor prose-writer has ever affirmed that he had any. As Hesiod says:—

'First Chaos came, and then broad-bosomed Earth, The everlasting seat of all that is, And Love.'

In other words, after Chaos, the Earth and Love, these two, came into being. Also Parmenides sings of Generation:

'First in the train of gods, he fashioned Love.'

And Acusilaus agrees with Hesiod. Thus numerous are the witnesses who acknowledge Love to be the eldest of the gods. And not only is he the eldest, he is also the source of the greatest benefits to us. For I know not any greater blessing to a young man who is beginning life than a virtuous lover, or to the lover than a beloved youth. For the principle which ought to be the guide of men who would nobly live—that principle, I say, neither kindred, nor honour, nor wealth, nor any other motive is able to implant so well as love. Of what am I speaking? Of the sense of honour and dishonour, without which neither states nor individuals ever do any good or great work. And I say that a lover who is detected in doing any dishonourable act, or submitting through cowardice when any dishonour is done to him by another, will be more pained at being detected by his beloved than at being seen by his father, or by his companions, or by any one else. The beloved too, when he is found in any disgraceful situation, has the same feeling about his lover. And if there were only some way of contriving that a state or an army should be made up of lovers and their loves (compare Rep.), they would be the very best governors of their own city, abstaining from all dishonour, and emulating one another in honour; and when fighting at each other's side, although a mere handful, they would overcome the world. For what lover would not choose rather to be seen by all mankind than by his beloved, either when abandoning his post or throwing away his arms? He would be ready to die a thousand deaths rather than endure this. Or who would desert his beloved or fail him in the hour of danger? The veriest coward would become an inspired hero, equal to the bravest, at such a time; Love would inspire him. That courage which, as Homer says, the god breathes into the souls of some heroes, Love of his own nature infuses into the lover.

Love will make men dare to die for their beloved—love alone; and women as well as men. Of this, Alcestis, the daughter of Pelias, is a monument to all Hellas; for she was willing to lay down her life on behalf of her husband, when no one else would, although he had a father and mother; but the tenderness of her love so far exceeded theirs, that she made them seem to be strangers in blood to their own son, and in name only related to him; and so noble did this action of hers appear to the gods, as well as to men, that among the many who have done virtuously she is one of the very few to whom, in admiration of her noble action, they have granted the privilege of returning alive to earth; such exceeding honour is paid by the gods to the devotion and virtue of love. But Orpheus, the son of Oeagrus, the harper, they sent empty away, and presented to him an apparition only of her whom he sought, but herself they would not give up, because he showed no spirit; he was only a harp-player, and did not dare like Alcestis to die for love, but was contriving how he might enter Hades alive; moreover, they afterwards caused him to suffer death at the hands of women, as the punishment of his cowardliness. Very different was the reward of the true love of Achilles towards his lover Patroclus—his lover and not his love (the notion that Patroclus was the beloved one is a foolish error into which Aeschylus has fallen, for Achilles was surely the fairer of the two, fairer also than all the other heroes; and, as Homer informs us, he was still beardless, and younger far). And greatly as the gods honour the virtue of love, still the return of love on the part of the beloved to the lover is more admired and valued and rewarded by them, for the lover is more divine; because he is inspired by God. Now Achilles was quite aware, for he had been told by his mother, that he might avoid death and return home, and live to a good old age, if he abstained from slaying Hector. Nevertheless he gave his life to revenge his friend, and dared to die, not only in his defence, but after he was dead. Wherefore the gods honoured him even above

Alcestis, and sent him to the Islands of the Blest. These are my reasons for affirming that Love is the eldest and noblest and mightiest of the gods; and the chiefest author and giver of virtue in life, and of happiness after death.

3. Eros and Arête: The speech of Pausanias

About Plato, *Symposium*, pp. 180C-189A (to Aristophanes' speech)

The speech of Pausanias begins, as does the speech of Phaedrus and all the other encomia of Plato's *Symposium*, with the convention for encomia, explicating the nature of the divinity *Eros*. *Eros* in Plato's *Symposium* refers sometimes to the god *Eros* and sometimes to the feeling or the drive *eros*. In this text, as in most, the convention will be to refer to the god with an upper case "E" and to the drive with a lower case "e." However, other than this convention of praising *eros* by explicating the divine nature of *Eros*, Pausanias' encomia contrasts sharply with that of Phaedrus. Phaedrus gives a concise, straight forward praise speech. Pausanias gives an elaborate, allusive, sophistically sophisticated speech. In the original Greek the wordplay of the speech is remarkable, second in its formal complexity only to the speech of Agathon in the *Symposium*'s speeches. Pausanias does take up a theme that was introduced by Phaedrus, the moral nature of *eros*. This is one of the key themes of the dialogue as a whole. How does *eros* relate to *arete*? "*Arete*" is typically translated as virtue or excellence. *Arete* also has a connotation of noble or honorable. The English word "virtue" recurs multiple times in the translation of the speech of Pausanias and in each case it translates the Ancient Greek "*arete*." The question addressed in the speech of Pausanias is, how can love — *eros* — make us better? How can *eros* lead to *arete* or excellence. In addition to the *eros–arete* connection, Plato's *Symposium* addresses another key connection, that between *agathos* — that which is good — and *kalos* — that which noble and beautiful. *Kalos*, another one of our Greek terms that does not translate in a simple manner, depended on a strong association between that which was beautiful and that which was noble. This reflected the centrality of aristocratic values in Ancient Greece, even in a democracy such as Athens. Male Athenian citizens (and only men could be citizens) viewed themselves as natural born aristocrats. They lived in a diverse trading city filled with other Greeks, non-Greeks ("barbarians" because they did not speak Greek), slaves and women. All these types of human beings were to some extent inherently lesser than the Athenian citizen. But for these men, being a citizen of Athens was not enough. There was the constant desire to live up to the ideal. This was to show, in one's life, in one's speech and in one's conduct that one had *arete*, that one was *agathos* (good) and *kalos* (beautiful).

The speech of Pausanias makes the aristocratic aspirations of the Athenians at Agathon's party by saying that *Eros* is inseparable from (the Greek used here is more literally translated as "colleague") Aphrodite and making the distinction between "common Aphrodite" and "heavenly Aphrodite." Pausanias builds on this distinction exalt the peculiar institution of ancient Greek pederasty or "boy-love."

In addition to being an Aristocratic society, Ancient Greece was a patriarchal society. Only Athenian males could be citizens or own property. Wives were responsible for managing the household and did not participate in the public life of the city. Girls were married in arranged marriages shortly after puberty often too much older men. This was because marriage for men was typically delayed as male made his social, political, and economic place in Athens. Prior to puberty, young boys usually lived with the women of the household. If the man of the household could afford it, this would often be in a separate part of the house. This seems to be the case for Agathon's household. Once a male child attained puberty, he would enter the male world. Military training would begin, and he would be socialized in ways of the masculine world.

The institution of Greek pederasty played a role in this process of socialization. Pederasty appears throughout Ancient Greece at the start of the 5th century BCE. It has older origins in Crete. By the time the symposium occurs it is a well-developed semi-formalized institution. The relation was between an older Greek male, commonly called an *erastês* ("lover") and a younger male, the *erômenos* ("beloved"). The *erômenos* was almost always at least 13 years of age and, more likely 15 or older. Fifteen was the minimum age for the beginning of military training. The *erômenos* could be as old as the late twenties to thirties and there was not always a great age difference between the *erastês* and the *erômenos*. The key distinguishing feature between the two was that the *erastês* was typically the active pursuer, trying to persuade the *erômenos* to "eros" him back. The *erastês* was "in love (*eros*) and thus is called the "lover." The *erômenos* was typically more passive acting as a beloved object to his lover's enticements. This obvious was a very asymmetrical relation. The younger beloved would offer to his lover his youthful beauty (sometimes they are referred to as "beauties" and male beauty was idealized in classical Athens.

The Kroisos Kouros, in Parian marble, found in Anavyssos (Greece), dating from circa 530 BC, now exhibited at the National Archaeological Museum of Athens. Photo by Mountain, Public Domain.

An issue of constant debate in classical Greek is what sort of physical relation is appropriate between the lover and the beloved. Specifically, is it appropriate for the beloved to give himself sexually to the lover? The relation certainly had an erotic element to it. Here is a fresco of a symposium where the lover on the right tries to kiss the youth on his left. Notes the beards on the lovers and the bare shadow of the beards on the beloveds.

Detail of a Fresco from the North wall of the Tomb of the Diver in Paestum, Italy. Photo by greenworlder, public domain.

The speech of Pausanias is a celebration of a virtuous (both in the sense of *arete* producing and morally defendable) pederastic *eros*. Pausanias emphasizes that the beloved need to be old enough to have possession of his own self and mind and thus, able to give full rational consent. Heavenly *eros* is also not guided merely by sexual desire but is motivated by a love for the *psyche* or the soul of the beloved. Such a relation is portrayed by Pausanias as mutually fulfilling and mutually beneficial. It is a relation where the loved is able to have as a companion an intelligent and beautiful youth and to nurture in that youth the wide variety of *arete* that defined Athenian nobility.

Pausanias was the lover of Agathon. Perhaps he wants the other attendees of the symposium to believe that this describes his relationship with Agathon. The two of them were lifelong companions.

Read this section of Plato's *Symposium* with this background in mind. Consider Pausanias' argument carefully and then assess it. Is the *eros*-relation he advocates truly "heavenly" love?

4. Eros and Cosmos: The Speech of Eryximachus

This is a speech where reading with the imagination yields particular benefit.

Exercises

1. In the order of reclining around the room, Aristophanes is supposed to speak after Pausanias. He doesn't. Why?

2. And what does Eryximachus recommend to him and what does Aristophanes say about the recommendation after Eryximachus' speech? How does this effect how we view Eryximachus' speech?

Also, note that Eryximachus is a physician. In making his speech he may be a bit out of his depth among these philosophers, playwrights, and sophists. He also may have been party to Alcibiades' mutilation of the Herm. He was said to have been charged with this along with Phaedrus and Aristophanes.

***Plato, Symposium, pp. 180C-189A*, Pausanius and Erixymachus**

This, or something like this, was the speech of Phaedrus; and some other speeches followed which Aristodemus did not remember; the next which he repeated was that of Pausanias. Phaedrus, he said, the argument has not been set before us, I think, quite in the right form;—we should not be called upon to praise Love in such an indiscriminate manner. If there were only one Love, then what you said would be well enough; but since there are more Loves than one,—should have begun by determining which of them was to be the theme of our praises. I will amend this defect; and first of all I will tell you which Love is deserving of praise, and then try to hymn the praiseworthy one in a manner worthy of him. For we all know that Love is inseparable from Aphrodite, and if there were only one Aphrodite there would be only one Love; but as there are two goddesses there must be two Loves. And am I not right in asserting that there are two goddesses? The elder one, having no mother, who is called the heavenly Aphrodite—she is the daughter of Uranus; the younger, who is the daughter of Zeus and Dione—her we call common; and the Love who is her fellow-worker is rightly named common, as the other love is called heavenly. All the gods ought to have praise given to them, but not without distinction of their natures; and therefore I must try to distinguish the characters of the two Loves. Now actions vary according to the manner of their performance. Take, for example, that which we are now doing, drinking, singing and talking—these actions are not in themselves either good or evil, but they turn out in this or that way according to the mode of performing them; and when well done they are good, and when wrongly done they are evil; and in like manner not every love, but only that which has a noble purpose, is noble and worthy of praise. The Love who is the offspring of the common Aphrodite is essentially common, and has no discrimination, being such as the meaner sort of men feel, and is apt to be of women as well as of youths, and is of the body rather than of the soul—the most foolish beings are the objects of this love which desires only to gain an end, but never thinks of accomplishing the end nobly, and therefore does good and evil quite indiscriminately. The goddess who is his mother is far younger than the other, and she was born of the union of the male and female, and partakes of both. But the offspring of the heavenly Aphrodite is derived from a mother in whose birth the female has no part,—she is from the male only; this is that love which is of youths, and the goddess being older, there is nothing of wantonness in her. Those who are inspired by this love turn to the male, and delight in him who is the more valiant and intelligent nature; any one may recognise the pure enthusiasts in the very character of their attachments. For they love not boys, but intelligent beings whose reason is beginning to be developed, much about the time at which their beards begin to grow. And in choosing young men to

be their companions, they mean to be faithful to them, and pass their whole life in company with them, not to take them in their inexperience, and deceive them, and play the fool with them, or run away from one to another of them. But the love of young boys should be forbidden by law, because their future is uncertain; they may turn out good or bad, either in body or soul, and much noble enthusiasm may be thrown away upon them; in this matter the good are a law to themselves, and the coarser sort of lovers ought to be restrained by force; as we restrain or attempt to restrain them from fixing their affections on women of free birth. These are the persons who bring a reproach on love; and some have been led to deny the lawfulness of such attachments because they see the impropriety and evil of them; for surely nothing that is decorously and lawfully done can justly be censured. Now here and in Lacedaemon the rules about love are perplexing, but in most cities they are simple and easily intelligible; in Elis and Boeotia, and in countries having no gifts of eloquence, they are very straightforward; the law is simply in favour of these connexions, and no one, whether young or old, has anything to say to their discredit; the reason being, as I suppose, that they are men of few words in those parts, and therefore the lovers do not like the trouble of pleading their suit. In Ionia and other places, and generally in countries which are subject to the barbarians, the custom is held to be dishonourable; loves of youths share the evil repute in which philosophy and gymnastics are held, because they are inimical to tyranny; for the interests of rulers require that their subjects should be poor in spirit (compare Arist. Politics), and that there should be no strong bond of friendship or society among them, which love, above all other motives, is likely to inspire, as our Athenian tyrants learned by experience; for the love of Aristogeiton and the constancy of Harmodius had a strength which undid their power. And, therefore, the ill-repute into which these attachments have fallen is to be ascribed to the evil condition of those who make them to be ill-reputed; that is to say, to the self-seeking of the governors and the cowardice of the governed; on the other hand, the indiscriminate honour which is given to them in some countries is attributable to the laziness of those who hold this opinion of them. In our own country a far better principle prevails, but, as I was saying, the explanation of it is rather perplexing. For, observe that open loves are held to be more honourable than secret ones, and that the love of the noblest and highest, even if their persons are less beautiful than others, is especially honourable. Consider, too, how great is the encouragement which all the world gives to the lover; neither is he supposed to be doing anything dishonourable; but if he succeeds he is praised, and if he fail he is blamed. And in the pursuit of his love the custom of mankind allows him to do many strange things, which philosophy would bitterly censure if they were done from any motive of interest, or wish for office or power. He may pray, and entreat, and supplicate, and swear, and lie on a mat at the door, and endure a slavery worse than that of any slave—in any other case friends and enemies would be equally ready to prevent him, but now there is no friend who will be ashamed of him and admonish him, and no enemy will charge him with meanness or flattery; the actions of a lover have a grace which ennobles them; and custom has decided that they are highly commendable and that there no loss of character in them; and, what is strangest of all, he only may swear and forswear himself (so men say), and the gods will forgive his transgression, for there is no such thing as a lover's oath. Such is the entire liberty which gods and men have allowed the lover, according to the custom which prevails in our part of the world. From this point of view a man fairly argues that in Athens to love and to be loved is held to be a very honourable thing. But when parents forbid their sons to talk with their lovers, and place them under a tutor's care, who is appointed to see to these things, and their companions and equals cast in their teeth anything of the sort which they may observe, and their elders refuse to silence the reprovers and do not rebuke them—any one who reflects on all this will, on the contrary, think that we hold these practices to be most disgraceful. But, as I was saying at first, the truth as I imagine is, that whether such practices are honourable or whether they are dishonourable is not a simple question; they are honourable to him who follows them honourably, dishonourable to him who follows them dishonourably. There is dishonour in yielding to the evil, or in an evil manner; but there is honour in yielding to the good, or in an honourable manner. Evil is the vulgar lover who loves the body rather than the soul, inasmuch as he is not even stable, because he loves a thing which is in itself unstable, and therefore when the bloom of youth which he was

desiring is over, he takes wing and flies away, in spite of all his words and promises; whereas the love of the noble disposition is life-long, for it becomes one with the everlasting. The custom of our country would have both of them proven well and truly, and would have us yield to the one sort of lover and avoid the other, and therefore encourages some to pursue, and others to fly; testing both the lover and beloved in contests and trials, until they show to which of the two classes they respectively belong. And this is the reason why, in the first place, a hasty attachment is held to be dishonourable, because time is the true test of this as of most other things; and secondly there is a dishonour in being overcome by the love of money, or of wealth, or of political power, whether a man is frightened into surrender by the loss of them, or, having experienced the benefits of money and political corruption, is unable to rise above the seductions of them. For none of these things are of a permanent or lasting nature; not to mention that no generous friendship ever sprang from them. There remains, then, only one way of honourable attachment which custom allows in the beloved, and this is the way of virtue; for as we admitted that any service which the lover does to him is not to be accounted flattery or a dishonour to himself, so the beloved has one way only of voluntary service which is not dishonourable, and this is virtuous service.

For we have a custom, and according to our custom any one who does service to another under the idea that he will be improved by him either in wisdom, or in some other particular of virtue—such a voluntary service, I say, is not to be regarded as a dishonour, and is not open to the charge of flattery. And these two customs, one the love of youth, and the other the practice of philosophy and virtue in general, ought to meet in one, and then the beloved may honourably indulge the lover. For when the lover and beloved come together, having each of them a law, and the lover thinks that he is right in doing any service which he can to his gracious loving one; and the other that he is right in showing any kindness which he can to him who is making him wise and good; the one capable of communicating wisdom and virtue, the other seeking to acquire them with a view to education and wisdom, when the two laws of love are fulfilled and meet in one—then, and then only, may the beloved yield with honour to the lover. Nor when love is of this disinterested sort is there any disgrace in being deceived, but in every other case there is equal disgrace in being or not being deceived. For he who is gracious to his lover under the impression that he is rich, and is disappointed of his gains because he turns out to be poor, is disgraced all the same: for he has done his best to show that he would give himself up to any one's 'uses base' for the sake of money; but this is not honourable. And on the same principle he who gives himself to a lover because he is a good man, and in the hope that he will be improved by his company, shows himself to be virtuous, even though the object of his affection turn out to be a villain, and to have no virtue; and if he is deceived he has committed a noble error. For he has proved that for his part he will do anything for anybody with a view to virtue and improvement, than which there can be nothing nobler. Thus noble in every case is the acceptance of another for the sake of virtue. This is that love which is the love of the heavenly godess, and is heavenly, and of great price to individuals and cities, making the lover and the beloved alike eager in the work of their own improvement. But all other loves are the offspring of the other, who is the common goddess. To you, Phaedrus, I offer this my contribution in praise of love, which is as good as I could make extempore.

Pausanias came to a pause—this is the balanced way in which I have been taught by the wise to speak; and Aristodemus said that the turn of Aristophanes was next, but either he had eaten too much, or from some other cause he had the hiccough, and was obliged to change turns with Eryximachus the physician, who was reclining on the couch below him. Eryximachus, he said, you ought either to stop my hiccough, or to speak in my turn until I have left off.

I will do both, said Eryximachus: I will speak in your turn, and do you speak in mine; and while I am speaking let me recommend you to hold your breath, and if after you have done so for some time the hiccough is no better, then gargle with a little water; and if it still continues, tickle your nose with something and sneeze;

and if you sneeze once or twice, even the most violent hiccough is sure to go. I will do as you prescribe, said Aristophanes, and now get on.

Eryximachus spoke as follows: Seeing that Pausanias made a fair beginning, and but a lame ending, I must endeavour to supply his deficiency. I think that he has rightly distinguished two kinds of love. But my art further informs me that the double love is not merely an affection of the soul of man towards the fair, or towards anything, but is to be found in the bodies of all animals and in productions of the earth, and I may say in all that is; such is the conclusion which I seem to have gathered from my own art of medicine, whence I learn how great and wonderful and universal is the deity of love, whose empire extends over all things, divine as well as human. And from medicine I will begin that I may do honour to my art. There are in the human body these two kinds of love, which are confessedly different and unlike, and being unlike, they have loves and desires which are unlike; and the desire of the healthy is one, and the desire of the diseased is another; and as Pausanias was just now saying that to indulge good men is honourable, and bad men dishonourable:—so too in the body the good and healthy elements are to be indulged, and the bad elements and the elements of disease are not to be indulged, but discouraged. And this is what the physician has to do, and in this the art of medicine consists: for medicine may be regarded generally as the knowledge of the loves and desires of the body, and how to satisfy them or not; and the best physician is he who is able to separate fair love from foul, or to convert one into the other; and he who knows how to eradicate and how to implant love, whichever is required, and can reconcile the most hostile elements in the constitution and make them loving friends, is a skilful practitioner. Now the most hostile are the most opposite, such as hot and cold, bitter and sweet, moist and dry, and the like. And my ancestor, Asclepius, knowing how to implant friendship and accord in these elements, was the creator of our art, as our friends the poets here tell us, and I believe them; and not only medicine in every branch but the arts of gymnastic and husbandry are under his dominion. Any one who pays the least attention to the subject will also perceive that in music there is the same reconciliation of opposites; and I suppose that this must have been the meaning of Heracleitus, although his words are not accurate; for he says that The One is united by disunion, like the harmony of the bow and the lyre. Now there is an absurdity saying that harmony is discord or is composed of elements which are still in a state of discord. But what he probably meant was, that harmony is composed of differing notes of higher or lower pitch which disagreed once, but are now reconciled by the art of music; for if the higher and lower notes still disagreed, there could be no harmony,—clearly not. For harmony is a symphony, and symphony is an agreement; but an agreement of disagreements while they disagree there cannot be; you cannot harmonize that which disagrees. In like manner rhythm is compounded of elements short and long, once differing and now in accord; which accordance, as in the former instance, medicine, so in all these other cases, music implants, making love and unison to grow up among them; and thus music, too, is concerned with the principles of love in their application to harmony and rhythm. Again, in the essential nature of harmony and rhythm there is no difficulty in discerning love which has not yet become double. But when you want to use them in actual life, either in the composition of songs or in the correct performance of airs or metres composed already, which latter is called education, then the difficulty begins, and the good artist is needed. Then the old tale has to be repeated of fair and heavenly love—the love of Urania the fair and heavenly muse, and of the duty of accepting the temperate, and those who are as yet intemperate only that they may become temperate, and of preserving their love; and again, of the vulgar Polyhymnia, who must be used with circumspection that the pleasure be enjoyed, but may not generate licentiousness; just as in my own art it is a great matter so to regulate the desires of the epicure that he may gratify his tastes without the attendant evil of disease. Whence I infer that in music, in medicine, in all other things human as well as divine, both loves ought to be noted as far as may be, for they are both present.

The course of the seasons is also full of both these principles; and when, as I was saying, the elements of hot and cold, moist and dry, attain the harmonious love of one another and blend in temperance and

harmony, they bring to men, animals, and plants health and plenty, and do them no harm; whereas the wanton love, getting the upper hand and affecting the seasons of the year, is very destructive and injurious, being the source of pestilence, and bringing many other kinds of diseases on animals and plants; for hoar-frost and hail and blight spring from the excesses and disorders of these elements of love, which to know in relation to the revolutions of the heavenly bodies and the seasons of the year is termed astronomy. Furthermore all sacrifices and the whole province of divination, which is the art of communion between gods and men—these, I say, are concerned only with the preservation of the good and the cure of the evil love. For all manner of impiety is likely to ensue if, instead of accepting and honouring and reverencing the harmonious love in all his actions, a man honours the other love, whether in his feelings towards gods or parents, towards the living or the dead. Wherefore the business of divination is to see to these loves and to heal them, and divination is the peacemaker of gods and men, working by a knowledge of the religious or irreligious tendencies which exist in human loves. Such is the great and mighty, or rather omnipotent force of love in general. And the love, more especially, which is concerned with the good, and which is perfected in company with temperance and justice, whether among gods or men, has the greatest power, and is the source of all our happiness and harmony, and makes us friends with the gods who are above us, and with one another. I dare say that I too have omitted several things which might be said in praise of Love, but this was not intentional, and you, Aristophanes, may now supply the omission or take some other line of commendation; for I perceive that you are rid of the hiccough.

5. Soulmates: The Speech of Aristophanes

Assignment for 27 January 2020

Read: II. *Eros* and Appearance versus Reality, Plato's *Symposium*

Aristophanes (c. 446 – c. 386 BC), one of the great comic poets of Classical Athens, is cured of his hiccups and, after teasing Eryximachus a bit, proceeds to give his speech. This is the same Aristophanes who wrote *Clouds*, a comedy that portrayed Socrates as a rather insane con-artist and Sophist.[5] Clouds was first performed in 419 BCE, three years before the symposium occurs so it and the portrait of Socrates in it is something all the attendees at the symposium would have been very aware of.

Aristophanes invents a mythological story about the origin of *eros* in human lives. As with much of what he wrote his myth is both very funny and very profound. Again, he is not claiming his story is true. It is a myth/ Like the best myth, it is a fiction that is intended to convey essential truths that are best communicated through the flamboyant ambition of mythic narrative.

Exercises

5. Do you remember the brief excerpt from *Clouds* in the *Apology* dramatization? Perhaps watch it again. Here is a link to the text of the play. http://classics.mit.edu/Aristophanes/clouds.html

Read his story using your imagination. Reflect on what Aristophanes is saying. After you have read and understood the speech, ask yourself what it is that Aristophanes is getting at in his speech.

Complete the following sentence:
Aristophanes is using his myth of the origins of humanity to say that *eros* is...

Plato, *Symposium*, pp. 189A-194E, Aristophanes

Yes, said Aristophanes, who followed, the hiccough is gone; not, however, until I applied the sneezing; and I wonder whether the harmony of the body has a love of such noises and ticklings, for I no sooner applied the sneezing than I was cured.

Eryximachus said: Beware, friend Aristophanes, although you are going to speak, you are making fun of me; and I shall have to watch and see whether I cannot have a laugh at your expense, when you might speak in peace.

You are right, said Aristophanes, laughing. I will unsay my words; but do you please not to watch me, as I fear that in the speech which I am about to make, instead of others laughing with me, which is to the manner born of our muse and would be all the better, I shall only be laughed at by them.

Do you expect to shoot your bolt and escape, Aristophanes? Well, perhaps if you are very careful and bear in mind that you will be called to account, I may be induced to let you off.

Aristophanes professed to open another vein of discourse; he had a mind to praise Love in another way, unlike that either of Pausanias or Eryximachus. Mankind, he said, judging by their neglect of him, have never, as I think, at all understood the power of Love. For if they had understood him they would surely have built noble temples and altars, and offered solemn sacrifices in his honour; but this is not done, and most certainly ought to be done: since of all the gods he is the best friend of men, the helper and the healer of the ills which are the great impediment to the happiness of the race. I will try to describe his power to you, and you shall teach the rest of the world what I am teaching you. In the first place, let me treat of the nature of man and what has happened to it; for the original human nature was not like the present, but different. The sexes were not two as they are now, but originally three in number; there was man, woman, and the union of the two, having a name corresponding to this double nature, which had once a real existence, but is now lost, and the word 'Androgynous' is only preserved as a term of reproach. In the second place, the primeval man was round, his back and sides forming a circle; and he had four hands and four feet, one head with two faces, looking opposite ways, set on a round neck and precisely alike; also four ears, two privy members, and the remainder to correspond. He could walk upright as men now do, backwards or forwards as he pleased, and he could also roll over and over at a great pace, turning on his four hands and four feet, eight in all, like tumblers going over and over with their legs in the air; this was when he wanted to run fast. Now the sexes were three, and such as I have described them; because the sun, moon, and earth are three; and the man was originally the child of the sun, the woman of the earth, and the man-woman of the moon, which is made up of sun and earth, and they were all round and moved round and round like their parents. Terrible was their might and strength, and the thoughts of their hearts were great, and they made an attack upon the gods; of them is told the tale of Otys and Ephialtes who, as Homer says, dared to scale heaven, and would have laid hands upon the gods. Doubt reigned in the celestial councils. Should they kill them and annihilate the race with thunderbolts, as they had done the giants, then there would be an end

of the sacrifices and worship which men offered to them; but, on the other hand, the gods could not suffer their insolence to be unrestrained. At last, after a good deal of reflection, Zeus discovered a way. He said: 'Methinks I have a plan which will humble their pride and improve their manners; men shall continue to exist, but I will cut them in two and then they will be diminished in strength and increased in numbers; this will have the advantage of making them more profitable to us. They shall walk upright on two legs, and if they continue insolent and will not be quiet, I will split them again and they shall hop about on a single leg.' He spoke and cut men in two, like a sorb-apple which is halved for pickling, or as you might divide an egg with a hair; and as he cut them one after another, he bade Apollo give the face and the half of the neck a turn in order that the man might contemplate the section of himself: he would thus learn a lesson of humility. Apollo was also bidden to heal their wounds and compose their forms. So he gave a turn to the face and pulled the skin from the sides all over that which in our language is called the belly, like the purses which draw in, and he made one mouth at the centre, which he fastened in a knot (the same which is called the navel); he also moulded the breast and took out most of the wrinkles, much as a shoemaker might smooth leather upon a last; he left a few, however, in the region of the belly and navel, as a memorial of the primeval state. After the division the two parts of man, each desiring his other half, came together, and throwing their arms about one another, entwined in mutual embraces, longing to grow into one, they were on the point of dying from hunger and self-neglect, because they did not like to do anything apart; and when one of the halves died and the other survived, the survivor sought another mate, man or woman as we call them,—being the sections of entire men or women,—and clung to that. They were being destroyed, when Zeus in pity of them invented a new plan: he turned the parts of generation round to the front, for this had not been always their position, and they sowed the seed no longer as hitherto like grasshoppers in the ground, but in one another; and after the transposition the male generated in the female in order that by the mutual embraces of man and woman they might breed, and the race might continue; or if man came to man they might be satisfied, and rest, and go their ways to the business of life: so ancient is the desire of one another which is implanted in us, reuniting our original nature, making one of two, and healing the state of man. Each of us when separated, having one side only, like a flat fish, is but the indenture of a man, and he is always looking for his other half. Men who are a section of that double nature which was once called Androgynous are lovers of women; adulterers are generally of this breed, and also adulterous women who lust after men: the women who are a section of the woman do not care for men, but have female attachments; the female companions are of this sort. But they who are a section of the male follow the male, and while they are young, being slices of the original man, they hang about men and embrace them, and they are themselves the best of boys and youths, because they have the most manly nature. Some indeed assert that they are shameless, but this is not true; for they do not act thus from any want of shame, but because they are valiant and manly, and have a manly countenance, and they embrace that which is like them. And these when they grow up become our statesmen, and these only, which is a great proof of the truth of what I am saying. When they reach manhood they are lovers of youth, and are not naturally inclined to marry or beget children,—if at all, they do so only in obedience to the law; but they are satisfied if they may be allowed to live with one another unwedded; and such a nature is prone to love and ready to return love, always embracing that which is akin to him. And when one of them meets with his other half, the actual half of himself, whether he be a lover of youth or a lover of another sort, the pair are lost in an amazement of love and friendship and intimacy, and one will not be out of the other's sight, as I may say, even for a moment: these are the people who pass their whole lives together; yet they could not explain what they desire of one another. For the intense yearning which each of them has towards the other does not appear to be the desire of lover's intercourse, but of something else which the soul of either evidently desires and cannot tell, and of which she has only a dark and doubtful presentiment. Suppose Hephaestus, with his instruments, to come to the pair who are lying side by side and to say to them, 'What do you people want of one another?' they would be unable to explain. And suppose further, that when he saw their perplexity he said: 'Do you desire to be wholly one; always day and night to be in one another's

company? for if this is what you desire, I am ready to melt you into one and let you grow together, so that being two you shall become one, and while you live live a common life as if you were a single man, and after your death in the world below still be one departed soul instead of two—I ask whether this is what you lovingly desire, and whether you are satisfied to attain this?'—there is not a man of them who when he heard the proposal would deny or would not acknowledge that this meeting and melting into one another, this becoming one instead of two, was the very expression of his ancient need (compare Arist. Pol.). And the reason is that human nature was originally one and we were a whole, and the desire and pursuit of the whole is called love. There was a time, I say, when we were one, but now because of the wickedness of mankind God has dispersed us, as the Arcadians were dispersed into villages by the Lacedaemonians. And if we are not obedient to the gods, there is a danger that we shall be split up again and go about in basso-relievo, like the profile figures having only half a nose which are sculptured on monuments, and that we shall be like tallies. Wherefore let us exhort all men to piety, that we may avoid evil, and obtain the good, of which Love is to us the lord and minister; and let no one oppose him—he is the enemy of the gods who opposes him. For if we are friends of the God and at peace with him we shall find our own true loves, which rarely happens in this world at present. I am serious, and therefore I must beg Eryximachus not to make fun or to find any allusion in what I am saying to Pausanias and Agathon, who, as I suspect, are both of the manly nature, and belong to the class which I have been describing. But my words have a wider application—they include men and women everywhere; and I believe that if our loves were perfectly accomplished, and each one returning to his primeval nature had his original true love, then our race would be happy. And if this would be best of all, the best in the next degree and under present circumstances must be the nearest approach to such an union; and that will be the attainment of a congenial love. Wherefore, if we would praise him who has given to us the benefit, we must praise the god Love, who is our greatest benefactor, both leading us in this life back to our own nature, and giving us high hopes for the future, for he promises that if we are pious, he will restore us to our original state, and heal us and make us happy and blessed. This, Eryximachus, is my discourse of love, which, although different to yours, I must beg you to leave unassailed by the shafts of your ridicule, in order that each may have his turn; each, or rather either, for Agathon and Socrates are the only ones left.

Here is a charming cartoon interpretation of the speech:

A YouTube element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: https://whatisphilosophy.pressbooks.sunycreate.cloud/?p=96

6. Goodman's Speech: The Speech of Agathon

About Plato, *Symposium*, pp. 194E-201D (speech of Agathon)

As you should know by now, this is Agathon's drinking party. He is celebrating his victory at the Lenaea, a winter festival dedicated to the God Dionysus. The previous night had been the public celebration and this night is a Symposium with friends. His lover, Pausanias, is present and has already given an encomium of heavenly *eros* as an inspiration to *arete*. Agathon speaks right after the great comic dramatist Aristophanes. Aristophanes has given a tragic-comic speech about how we are driven by the need to be whole to find a companion who will make us complete. After Agathon, only Socrates, with whom Agathon is sharing his bench, is left to speak.

The historical Agathon was a renowned for his great beauty. In his play, *Thesmophoriazousae*, Aristophanes describes him as pale, effeminate, clean shaven and dressed in elaborate woman's clothing. Aristophanes mentions and mocks Agathon in at least three of his comedies. Remember, though, that this is what Aristophanes does. He has also done this to Socrates.

With his encomia coming between that of Aristophanes and Socrates, Agathon is in an awkward place. Socrates reminds Agathon of this by saying to Eryximachus, "if you were as I am now, or rather as I shall be when Agathon has spoken, you would, indeed, be in a great strait." Agathon, seemingly immediately onto the game Socrates is playing responds, "You want to cast a spell over me, Socrates, said Agathon, in

the hope that I may be disconcerted at the expectation raised among the audience that I shall speak well." This leads to the start of a Socratic *elenchus* as to whether one should be ashamed for doing something shameful before the wise but not before the ignorant. Phaedrus cuts this off saying, "do not answer him, my dear Agathon; for if he can only get a partner with whom he can talk, especially a good-looking one, he will no longer care about the completion of our plan." Phaedrus' interruption allows Agathon to make his speech, but the exchange between Agathon and Socrates, foreshadows a more extended cross-examination by Socrates after Agathon gives his speech.

Agathon's speech is a stylistically extravagant oration full of images of flowers and softness and little sophistical wordplays and arguments. Agathon claims to switch the topic from the effects of *eros* to *Eros* himself. In other words, he is praising the God not the consequences of the the God's effects on us. *Eros*, he claims, is the happiest of Gods, because *Eros*, is the most beautiful and best of Gods. *Eros* is eternally young, and he is soft and insinuates himself into the softest things and parts of us. But not only is *Eros* young and beautiful, *Eros* is just, moderate, courageous and wise. He concludes that *Eros* creates order in the universe by inspiring love of beauty.

Agathon's speech is met with applause. Socrates remarks, "I was reminded of Gorgias [Gorgias was a great Sophist teacher of rhetoric who gets a whole Platonic dialogue built around his when he comes to Athens], and at the end of his speech I fancied that Agathon was shaking at me the Gorginian or Gorgonian [the Gorgon were mythological sisters whose hair was snake and whose visage could turn one to stone] head of the great master of rhetoric, which was simply to turn me and my speech into stone, as Homer says (Odyssey), and strike me dumb."[6] Socrates here is, of course, teasing Agathon here. But he also uses this as an excuse to engage in the cross-examination he attempted prior to Agathon's speech. Socrates also, facetiously, trys to use this praise of Agathon's speech to beg out of the evening's competition by saying he realizes that he cannot compete in giving a speech in praise of *Eros*. In all of these rhetorical moves both before and after Agathon's speech Plato is having Socrates prepare the groundwork for his own speech.

After all this Socrates asks, "Say then, Phaedrus, whether you would like to have the truth about love, spoken in any words and in any order which may happen to come into my mind at the time. Will that be agreeable to you?"

Given permission to do this, we then get the speech of Socrates. This, though, is the next reading.

Before that we get the speech of Agathon. Once again, pay attention to the structure of this section. There are three parts. (1) The introduction which involves a conversation between Agathon and Socrates and is terminated by Phaedrus. (2) Agathon's speech. (3) Socrates' subsequent *elenchus* of Agathon.

Plato, *Symposium*, pp. 194E-201D (The Speech of Agathon)

Indeed, I am not going to attack you, said Eryximachus, for I thought your speech charming, and did I not know that Agathon and Socrates are masters in the art of love, I should be really afraid that they would have nothing to say, after the world of things which have been said already. But, for all that, I am not without hopes.

Socrates said: You played your part well, Eryximachus; but if you were as I am now, or rather as I shall be when Agathon has spoken, you would, indeed, be in a great strait.

6. Note how Plato has Socrates slide from Agathon, who is his host and whose victory they are celebrating, to Gorgias the slightly disreputable sophist, to the Gorgon, a monster whose gaze turns people to stone. Throughout *Symposium* Plato uses language to add dimensions of commentary onto the obvious action of the dialogue. This is why it is beneficial to read the dialogue carefully and multiple times.

You want to cast a spell over me, Socrates, said Agathon, in the hope that I may be disconcerted at the expectation raised among the audience that I shall speak well.

I should be strangely forgetful, Agathon replied Socrates, of the courage and magnanimity which you showed when your own compositions were about to be exhibited, and you came upon the stage with the actors and faced the vast theatre altogether undismayed, if I thought that your nerves could be fluttered at a small party of friends.

Do you think, Socrates, said Agathon, that my head is so full of the theatre as not to know how much more formidable to a man of sense a few good judges are than many fools?

Nay, replied Socrates, I should be very wrong in attributing to you, Agathon, that or any other want of refinement. And I am quite aware that if you happened to meet with any whom you thought wise, you would care for their opinion much more than for that of the many. But then we, having been a part of the foolish many in the theatre, cannot be regarded as the select wise; though I know that if you chanced to be in the presence, not of one of ourselves, but of some really wise man, you would be ashamed of disgracing yourself before him—would you not?

Yes, said Agathon.

But before the many you would not be ashamed, if you thought that you were doing something disgraceful in their presence?

Here Phaedrus interrupted them, saying: not answer him, my dear Agathon; for if he can only get a partner with whom he can talk, especially a good-looking one, he will no longer care about the completion of our plan. Now I love to hear him talk; but just at present I must not forget the encomium on Love which I ought to receive from him and from every one. When you and he have paid your tribute to the god, then you may talk.

Very good, Phaedrus, said Agathon; I see no reason why I should not proceed with my speech, as I shall have many other opportunities of conversing with Socrates. Let me say first how I ought to speak, and then speak:—

The previous speakers, instead of praising the god Love, or unfolding his nature, appear to have congratulated mankind on the benefits which he confers upon them. But I would rather praise the god first, and then speak of his gifts; this is always the right way of praising everything. May I say without impiety or offence, that of all the blessed gods he is the most blessed because he is the fairest and best? And he is the fairest: for, in the first place, he is the youngest, and of his youth he is himself the witness, fleeing out of the way of age, who is swift enough, swifter truly than most of us like:—Love hates him and will not come near him; but youth and love live and move together—like to like, as the proverb says. Many things were said by Phaedrus about Love in which I agree with him; but I cannot agree that he is older than Iapetus and Kronos:—not so; I maintain him to be the youngest of the gods, and youthful ever. The ancient doings among the gods of which Hesiod and Parmenides spoke, if the tradition of them be true, were done of Necessity and not of Love; had Love been in those days, there would have been no chaining or mutilation of the gods, or other violence, but peace and sweetness, as there is now in heaven, since the rule of Love began. Love is young and also tender; he ought to have a poet like Homer to describe his tenderness, as Homer says of Ate, that she is a goddess and tender:—

'Her feet are tender, for she sets her steps, Not on the ground but on the heads of men:'

herein is an excellent proof of her tenderness,—that she walks not upon the hard but upon the soft. Let us adduce a similar proof of the tenderness of Love; for he walks not upon the earth, nor yet upon the skulls of

men, which are not so very soft, but in the hearts and souls of both gods and men, which are of all things the softest: in them he walks and dwells and makes his home. Not in every soul without exception, for where there is hardness he departs, where there is softness there he dwells; and nestling always with his feet and in all manner of ways in the softest of soft places, how can he be other than the softest of all things? Of a truth he is the tenderest as well as the youngest, and also he is of flexile form; for if he were hard and without flexure he could not enfold all things, or wind his way into and out of every soul of man undiscovered. And a proof of his flexibility and symmetry of form is his grace, which is universally admitted to be in an especial manner the attribute of Love; ungrace and love are always at war with one another. The fairness of his complexion is revealed by his habitation among the flowers; for he dwells not amid bloomless or fading beauties, whether of body or soul or aught else, but in the place of flowers and scents, there he sits and abides. Concerning the beauty of the god I have said enough; and yet there remains much more which I might say. Of his virtue I have now to speak: his greatest glory is that he can neither do nor suffer wrong to or from any god or any man; for he suffers not by force if he suffers; force comes not near him, neither when he acts does he act by force. For all men in all things serve him of their own free will, and where there is voluntary agreement, there, as the laws which are the lords of the city say, is justice. And not only is he just but exceedingly temperate, for Temperance is the acknowledged ruler of the pleasures and desires, and no pleasure ever masters Love; he is their master and they are his servants; and if he conquers them he must be temperate indeed. As to courage, even the God of War is no match for him; he is the captive and Love is the lord, for love, the love of Aphrodite, masters him, as the tale runs; and the master is stronger than the servant. And if he conquers the bravest of all others, he must be himself the bravest. Of his courage and justice and temperance I have spoken, but I have yet to speak of his wisdom; and according to the measure of my ability I must try to do my best. In the first place he is a poet (and here, like Eryximachus, I magnify my art), and he is also the source of poesy in others, which he could not be if he were not himself a poet. And at the touch of him every one becomes a poet, even though he had no music in him before (A fragment of the Sthenoaoea of Euripides.); this also is a proof that Love is a good poet and accomplished in all the fine arts; for no one can give to another that which he has not himself, or teach that of which he has no knowledge. Who will deny that the creation of the animals is his doing? Are they not all the works of his wisdom, born and begotten of him? And as to the artists, do we not know that he only of them whom love inspires has the light of fame?—he whom Love touches not walks in darkness. The arts of medicine and archery and divination were discovered by Apollo, under the guidance of love and desire; so that he too is a disciple of Love. Also the melody of the Muses, the metallurgy of Hephaestus, the weaving of Athene, the empire of Zeus over gods and men, are all due to Love, who was the inventor of them. And so Love set in order the empire of the gods—the love of beauty, as is evident, for with deformity Love has no concern. In the days of old, as I began by saying, dreadful deeds were done among the gods, for they were ruled by Necessity; but now since the birth of Love, and from the Love of the beautiful, has sprung every good in heaven and earth. Therefore, Phaedrus, I say of Love that he is the fairest and best in himself, and the cause of what is fairest and best in all other things. And there comes into my mind a line of poetry in which he is said to be the god who

'Gives peace on earth and calms the stormy deep, Who stills the winds and bids the sufferer sleep.'

This is he who empties men of disaffection and fills them with affection, who makes them to meet together at banquets such as these: in sacrifices, feasts, dances, he is our lord—who sends courtesy and sends away discourtesy, who gives kindness ever and never gives unkindness; the friend of the good, the wonder of the wise, the amazement of the gods; desired by those who have no part in him, and precious to those who have the better part in him; parent of delicacy, luxury, desire, fondness, softness, grace; regardful of the good, regardless of the evil: in every word, work, wish, fear—saviour, pilot, comrade, helper; glory of gods and men, leader best and brightest: in whose footsteps let every man follow, sweetly singing in his honour and joining in that sweet strain with which love charms the souls of gods and men. Such is the

speech, Phaedrus, half-playful, yet having a certain measure of seriousness, which, according to my ability, I dedicate to the god.

When Agathon had done speaking, Aristodemus said that there was a general cheer; the young man was thought to have spoken in a manner worthy of himself, and of the god. And Socrates, looking at Eryximachus, said: Tell me, son of Acumenus, was there not reason in my fears? and was I not a true prophet when I said that Agathon would make a wonderful oration, and that I should be in a strait?

The part of the prophecy which concerns Agathon, replied Eryximachus, appears to me to be true; but not the other part—that you will be in a strait.

Why, my dear friend, said Socrates, must not I or any one be in a strait who has to speak after he has heard such a rich and varied discourse? I am especially struck with the beauty of the concluding words—who could listen to them without amazement? When I reflected on the immeasurable inferiority of my own powers, I was ready to run away for shame, if there had been a possibility of escape. For I was reminded of Gorgias, and at the end of his speech I fancied that Agathon was shaking at me the Gorginian or Gorgonian head of the great master of rhetoric, which was simply to turn me and my speech into stone, as Homer says (Odyssey), and strike me dumb. And then I perceived how foolish I had been in consenting to take my turn with you in praising love, and saying that I too was a master of the art, when I really had no conception how anything ought to be praised. For in my simplicity I imagined that the topics of praise should be true, and that this being presupposed, out of the true the speaker was to choose the best and set them forth in the best manner. And I felt quite proud, thinking that I knew the nature of true praise, and should speak well. Whereas I now see that the intention was to attribute to Love every species of greatness and glory, whether really belonging to him or not, without regard to truth or falsehood—that was no matter; for the original proposal seems to have been not that each of you should really praise Love, but only that you should appear to praise him. And so you attribute to Love every imaginable form of praise which can be gathered anywhere; and you say that 'he is all this,' and 'the cause of all that,' making him appear the fairest and best of all to those who know him not, for you cannot impose upon those who know him. And a noble and solemn hymn of praise have you rehearsed. But as I misunderstood the nature of the praise when I said that I would take my turn, I must beg to be absolved from the promise which I made in ignorance, and which (as Euripides would say (Eurip. Hyppolytus)) was a promise of the lips and not of the mind. Farewell then to such a strain: for I do not praise in that way; no, indeed, I cannot. But if you like to hear the truth about love, I am ready to speak in my own manner, though I will not make myself ridiculous by entering into any rivalry with you. Say then, Phaedrus, whether you would like to have the truth about love, spoken in any words and in any order which may happen to come into my mind at the time. Will that be agreeable to you?

Aristodemus said that Phaedrus and the company bid him speak in any manner which he thought best. Then, he added, let me have your permission first to ask Agathon a few more questions, in order that I may take his admissions as the premisses of my discourse.

I grant the permission, said Phaedrus: put your questions. Socrates then proceeded as follows:—

In the magnificent oration which you have just uttered, I think that you were right, my dear Agathon, in proposing to speak of the nature of Love first and afterwards of his works—that is a way of beginning which I very much approve. And as you have spoken so eloquently of his nature, may I ask you further, Whether love is the love of something or of nothing? And here I must explain myself: I do not want you to say that love is the love of a father or the love of a mother—that would be ridiculous; but to answer as you would, if I asked is a father a father of something? to which you would find no difficulty in replying, of a son or daughter: and the answer would be right.

Very true, said Agathon.

And you would say the same of a mother?

He assented.

Yet let me ask you one more question in order to illustrate my meaning: Is not a brother to be regarded essentially as a brother of something?

Certainly, he replied.

That is, of a brother or sister?

Yes, he said.

And now, said Socrates, I will ask about Love:—Is Love of something or of nothing?

Of something, surely, he replied.

Keep in mind what this is, and tell me what I want to know—whether Love desires that of which love is.

Yes, surely.

And does he possess, or does he not possess, that which he loves and desires?

Probably not, I should say.

Nay, replied Socrates, I would have you consider whether 'necessarily' is not rather the word. The inference that he who desires something is in want of something, and that he who desires nothing is in want of nothing, is in my judgment, Agathon, absolutely and necessarily true. What do you think?

I agree with you, said Agathon.

Very good. Would he who is great, desire to be great, or he who is strong, desire to be strong?

That would be inconsistent with our previous admissions.

True. For he who is anything cannot want to be that which he is?

Very true.

And yet, added Socrates, if a man being strong desired to be strong, or being swift desired to be swift, or being healthy desired to be healthy, in that case he might be thought to desire something which he already has or is. I give the example in order that we may avoid misconception. For the possessors of these qualities, Agathon, must be supposed to have their respective advantages at the time, whether they choose or not; and who can desire that which he has? Therefore, when a person says, I am well and wish to be well, or I am rich and wish to be rich, and I desire simply to have what I have—to him we shall reply: 'You, my friend, having wealth and health and strength, want to have the continuance of them; for at this moment, whether you choose or no, you have them. And when you say, I desire that which I have and nothing else, is not your meaning that you want to have what you now have in the future?' He must agree with us—must he not?

He must, replied Agathon.

Then, said Socrates, he desires that what he has at present may be preserved to him in the future, which is

equivalent to saying that he desires something which is non-existent to him, and which as yet he has not got:

Very true, he said.

Then he and every one who desires, desires that which he has not already, and which is future and not present, and which he has not, and is not, and of which he is in want;—these are the sort of things which love and desire seek?

Very true, he said.

Then now, said Socrates, let us recapitulate the argument. First, is not love of something, and of something too which is wanting to a man?

Yes, he replied.

Remember further what you said in your speech, or if you do not remember I will remind you: you said that the love of the beautiful set in order the empire of the gods, for that of deformed things there is no love—did you not say something of that kind?

Yes, said Agathon.

Yes, my friend, and the remark was a just one. And if this is true, Love is the love of beauty and not of deformity?

He assented.

And the admission has been already made that Love is of something which a man wants and has not?

True, he said.

Then Love wants and has not beauty?

Certainly, he replied.

And would you call that beautiful which wants and does not possess beauty?

Certainly not.

Then would you still say that love is beautiful?

Agathon replied: I fear that I did not understand what I was saying.

You made a very good speech, Agathon, replied Socrates; but there is yet one small question which I would fain ask:—Is not the good also the beautiful?

Yes.

Then in wanting the beautiful, love wants also the good?

I cannot refute you, Socrates, said Agathon:—Let us assume that what you say is true.

Say rather, beloved Agathon, that you cannot refute the truth; for Socrates is easily refuted.

7. The Philosophical Ascent: The Speech of Socrates

About Plato, *Symposium*, pp. 201D-212D (speech of Socrates)

Socrates, having been given permission to tell "the truth about love," and having laid the groundwork for his speech with his cross examination of Agathon starts his speech by telling his listeners that he himself had been subjected to the same line of questioning by one "Diotima." Diotima of Mantineia, was, Socrates claims, "*a woman wise in this and in many other kinds of knowledge, who in the days of old, when the Athenians offered sacrifice before the coming of the plague, delayed the disease ten years.*" She was *"his teacher in the art of love."*

Socrates proceeds not to give his own speech, but to give the lesson in eros he was given by Diotima. After her cross-examination of Socrates, Diotima begins by talking about the origin of *eros*. In this way her instruction of Socrates resembles the other speeches of the *Symposium*. She next talks of how *eros* inspires us to seek beauty and the immortal possession of the beautiful. Then, finally she speaks of what she calls the "greater mysteries" of *eros* by describing the "philosophical ascent" eros inspires the true lover to undertake. That ascent takes one, "*from one going on to two, and from two to all fair forms, and from fair forms to fair practices, and from fair practices to fair notions, until from fair notions, he arrives at the notion of absolute beauty, and at last knows what the essence of beauty is."* This idea of "absolute beauty" and "the essence of beauty" is seen by most interpreters of *Symposium* as presenting the core philosophical message of *Symposium*. This message is Plato's theory of the *Eidos*. *Eidos* is most directly translated as "ideas" but in philosophy this is frequently called "Plato's theory of the forms."

Throughout her speech Diotima refers to *eros* for what is called, in the Jowett and most other translations, that which is "beautiful." As was noted in the introduction to the speech of Pausanias. Greek word translated her is τὸ καλόν, or *kalon*. Like *eros* and *arete*, *kalon* cannot be directly translated into English. "Beautiful" points us towards one aspect of the concept, but *kalon* is profoundly complex. Something can be *kalon* if it is, among other things:

- attractive or appealing
- beautiful in appearance
- of good (*agathos*) quality
- virtuous (*arete*), noble or honorable

This ambiguity in the use of *kalon* is not foreign to the use of "beauty" in contemporary English. The great Brazilian footballer, Pelé is credited with coining the phrase "the beautiful game" to characterize football. We sometimes say "it's a beauty" when we refer to a significant instance of something. It is, though, not to conflate our ambiguity with that of *kalon* in the Ancient Greek.

In her speech, Diotima moves easily from the desire for that which is *kalon* to that which is *agathos*. Both of these concepts are closely tied to *arete*. One might say that that which is truly beautiful is good and that which is good is noble and honorable. This approximates some of what is being presented by Diotima. Reflect on whether this makes sense to you. This is an argument both about the true nature of *eros* and about what a desirable life should be. Plato's metaphysics of the forms leads to a vision of the well-live, the good, life. Those who do not *eros* the virtuous beauty of the forms are like the prisoners in the cave, chained to the pursuit of illusions. The philosopher, with Socrates our example, center stage, is the free person whose life is devoted to what is true and real. This path gives Socrates abilities that transcend those of his poor confused peers. For more on this, see the portrait of him in the last section of the *Symposium*.

This is yet another structurally complex speech. First there is the introduction to Diotima and Diotima's elenchus of Socrates. In this Socrates shows himself as having been as ignorant of the truth of *eros* as Agathon is. After this, Diotima, again like the previous speakers, spins a small myth, about the origins of eros. She uses this to present the lesser mystery of *eros* as the desire for the eternal possession of the beautiful. After this she presents the greater mystery of the philosophical ascent from the desire for one particular beautiful person to the desire for beauty itself. Beauty itself is the pure and unchanging *eidos*, or idea, or form of beauty.

As the preceding paragraph should make evident, there is a great deal going on in this speech. I suggest that you read the speech of Socrates once straight through from beginning to end even if you do not understand it. Then, before class, read it a second time, more carefully. After we go over it class, read it a third time to see what you understand. Socrates' speech is both complex and philosophically profound. Even after three readings you will likely not understand every nuance of the speech. Be okay with this. This is how philosophy is.

Try, though, to answer the following questions as you read and think about the speech:

What is Plato doing by having two versions of the same basic *elenchus* on the notion that love is good and love is beautiful?

Why does Plato have Socrates present not his own speech, by that of Diotima, his instructress in love?

Why does Plato make Socrates' love-teacher a woman?

What is the point of saying that love is not a god but rather a *daemon*?

Why does Diotima distinguish between the "lesser" and the "greater" mysteries of love?

What is she doing with her "pregnancy" metaphor?

And what is the point of the ascent from "one beautiful form" to the "contemplation of beauty absolute"?

Plato, *Symposium*, pp. 201D-212D (The Speech of Socrates)

And now, taking my leave of you, I would rehearse a tale of love which I heard from Diotima of Mantineia, a woman wise in this and in many other kinds of knowledge, who in the days of old, when the Athenians offered sacrifice before the coming of the plague, delayed the disease ten years. She was my instructress in the art of love, and I shall repeat to you what she said to me, beginning with the admissions made by Agathon, which are nearly if not quite the same which I made to the wise woman when she questioned me: I think that this will be the easiest way, and I shall take both parts myself as well as I can (compare Gorgias). As you, Agathon, suggested (supra), I must speak first of the being and nature of Love, and then of his works. First, I said to her in nearly the same words which he used to me, that Love was a mighty god, and likewise fair; and she proved to me as I proved to him that, by my own showing, Love was neither fair nor good. 'What do you mean, Diotima,' I said, 'is love then evil and foul?' 'Hush,' she cried; 'must that be foul which is not fair?' 'Certainly,' I said. 'And is that which is not wise, ignorant? do you not see that there is a mean between wisdom and ignorance?' 'And what may that be?' I said. 'Right opinion,' she replied; 'which,

as you know, being incapable of giving a reason, is not knowledge (for how can knowledge be devoid of reason? nor again, ignorance, for neither can ignorance attain the truth), but is clearly something which is a mean between ignorance and wisdom.' 'Quite true,' I replied. 'Do not then insist,' she said, 'that what is not fair is of necessity foul, or what is not good evil; or infer that because love is not fair and good he is therefore foul and evil; for he is in a mean between them.' 'Well,' I said, 'Love is surely admitted by all to be a great god.' 'By those who know or by those who do not know?' 'By all.' 'And how, Socrates,' she said with a smile, 'can Love be acknowledged to be a great god by those who say that he is not a god at all?' 'And who are they?' I said. 'You and I are two of them,' she replied. 'How can that be?' I said. 'It is quite intelligible,' she replied; 'for you yourself would acknowledge that the gods are happy and fair—of course you would—would you dare to say that any god was not?' 'Certainly not,' I replied. 'And you mean by the happy, those who are the possessors of things good or fair?' 'Yes.' 'And you admitted that Love, because he was in want, desires those good and fair things of which he is in want?' 'Yes, I did.' 'But how can he be a god who has no portion in what is either good or fair?' 'Impossible.' 'Then you see that you also deny the divinity of Love.'

What, then is the core confusion shared by Socrates and Agathon about the nature of *eros*?

In what follows, Diotima creates a myth about the true nature of *eros*. Read this carefully and try to recount what it is that she is claiming about the nature of *eros*.

'What then is Love?' I asked; 'Is he mortal?' 'No.' 'What then?' 'As in the former instance, he is neither mortal nor immortal, but in a mean between the two.' 'What is he, Diotima?' 'He is a great spirit (daimon), and like all spirits he is intermediate between the divine and the mortal.' 'And what,' I said, 'is his power?' 'He interprets,' she replied, 'between gods and men, conveying and taking across to the gods the prayers and sacrifices of men, and to men the commands and replies of the gods; he is the mediator who spans the chasm which divides them, and therefore in him all is bound together, and through him the arts of the prophet and the priest, their sacrifices and mysteries and charms, and all prophecy and incantation, find their way. For God mingles not with man; but through Love all the intercourse and converse of God with man, whether awake or asleep, is carried on. The wisdom which understands this is spiritual; all other wisdom, such as that of arts and handicrafts, is mean and vulgar. Now these spirits or intermediate powers are many and diverse, and one of them is Love.' 'And who,' I said, 'was his father, and who his mother?' 'The tale,' she said, 'will take time; nevertheless I will tell you. On the birthday of Aphrodite there was a feast of the gods, at which the god Poros or Plenty, who is the son of Metis or Discretion, was one of the guests. When the feast was over, Penia or Poverty, as the manner is on such occasions, came about the doors to beg. Now Plenty who was the worse for nectar (there was no wine in those days), went into the garden of Zeus and fell into a heavy sleep, and Poverty considering her own straitened circumstances, plotted to have a child by him, and accordingly she lay down at his side and conceived Love, who partly because he is naturally a lover of the beautiful, and because Aphrodite is herself beautiful, and also because he was born on her birthday, is her follower and attendant. And as his parentage is, so also are his fortunes. In the first place he is always poor, and anything but tender and fair, as the many imagine him; and he is rough and squalid, and has no shoes, nor a house to dwell in; on the bare earth exposed he lies under the open heaven, in the streets, or at the doors of houses, taking his rest; and like his mother he is always in distress. Like his father too, whom he also partly resembles, he is always plotting against the fair and good; he is bold, enterprising, strong, a mighty hunter, always weaving some intrigue or other, keen in the pursuit of wisdom, fertile in resources; a philosopher at all times, terrible as an enchanter, sorcerer, sophist. He is by nature neither mortal nor immortal, but alive and flourishing at one moment when he is in plenty, and dead at another moment, and again alive by reason of his father's nature. But that which is always flowing in is always flowing out, and so he is never in want and never in wealth; and, further, he is in a mean between ignorance and knowledge. The truth of the matter is this: No god is a philosopher or seeker after wisdom, for he is wise already; nor does any man who is wise seek after wisdom. Neither do the ignorant seek after

wisdom. For herein is the evil of ignorance, that he who is neither good nor wise is nevertheless satisfied with himself: he has no desire for that of which he feels no want.' 'But who then, Diotima,' I said, 'are the lovers of wisdom, if they are neither the wise nor the foolish?' 'A child may answer that question,' she replied; 'they are those who are in a mean between the two; Love is one of them. For wisdom is a most beautiful thing, and Love is of the beautiful; and therefore Love is also a philosopher or lover of wisdom, and being a lover of wisdom is in a mean between the wise and the ignorant. And of this too his birth is the cause; for his father is wealthy and wise, and his mother poor and foolish. Such, my dear Socrates, is the nature of the spirit Love. The error in your conception of him was very natural, and as I imagine from what you say, has arisen out of a confusion of love and the beloved, which made you think that love was all beautiful. For the beloved is the truly beautiful, and delicate, and perfect, and blessed; but the principle of love is of another nature, and is such as I have described.'

Here Diotima shifts from the origins of *eros* to, as she puts it, "*When a man loves* [feels eros or desire towards] *the beautiful, what does he desire*?" Read this carefully. What, according to Diotima, do men desire when they desire that which is "beautiful"? Clue: Why is it that when one possesses a beautiful thing one continues to feel *eros* towards it? How does this correspond to Diotima's notions of the "procreation," "generation," "birth in beauty" and immortality?

I said, 'O thou stranger woman, thou sayest well; but, assuming Love to be such as you say, what is the use of him to men?' 'That, Socrates,' she replied, 'I will attempt to unfold: of his nature and birth I have already spoken; and you acknowledge that love is of the beautiful. But some one will say: Of the beautiful in what, Socrates and Diotima?—or rather let me put the question more clearly, and ask: When a man loves the beautiful, what does he desire?' I answered her 'That the beautiful may be his.' 'Still,' she said, 'the answer suggests a further question: What is given by the possession of beauty?' 'To what you have asked,' I replied, 'I have no answer ready.' 'Then,' she said, 'let me put the word "good" in the place of the beautiful, and repeat the question once more: If he who loves loves the good, what is it then that he loves?' 'The possession of the good,' I said. 'And what does he gain who possesses the good?' 'Happiness,' I replied; 'there is less difficulty in answering that question.' 'Yes,' she said, 'the happy are made happy by the acquisition of good things. Nor is there any need to ask why a man desires happiness; the answer is already final.' 'You are right.' I said. 'And is this wish and this desire common to all? and do all men always desire their own good, or only some men?—what say you?' 'All men,' I replied; 'the desire is common to all.' 'Why, then,' she rejoined, 'are not all men, Socrates, said to love, but only some of them? whereas you say that all men are always loving the same things.' 'I myself wonder,' I said, 'why this is.' 'There is nothing to wonder at,' she replied; 'the reason is that one part of love is separated off and receives the name of the whole, but the other parts have other names.' 'Give an illustration,' I said. She answered me as follows: 'There is poetry, which, as you know, is complex and manifold. All creation or passage of non-being into being is poetry or making, and the processes of all art are creative; and the masters of arts are all poets or makers.' 'Very true.' 'Still,' she said, 'you know that they are not called poets, but have other names; only that portion of the art which is separated off from the rest, and is concerned with music and metre, is termed poetry, and they who possess poetry in this sense of the word are called poets.' 'Very true,' I said. 'And the same holds of love. For you may say generally that all desire of good and happiness is only the great and subtle power of love; but they who are drawn towards him by any other path, whether the path of money-making or gymnastics or philosophy, are not called lovers—the name of the whole is appropriated to those whose affection takes one form only—they alone are said to love, or to be lovers.' 'I dare say,' I replied, 'that you are right.' 'Yes,' she added, 'and you hear people say that lovers are seeking for their other half; but I say that they are seeking neither for the half of themselves, nor for the whole, unless the half or the whole be also a good. And they will cut off their own hands and feet and cast them away, if they are evil; for they love not what is their own, unless perchance there be someone who calls what belongs to him the good, and what belongs to another the evil. For there is nothing which men love but the good. Is there anything?' 'Certainly, I should

say, that there is nothing.' 'Then,' she said, 'the simple truth is, that men love the good.' 'Yes,' I said. 'To which must be added that they love the possession of the good?' 'Yes, that must be added.' 'And not only the possession, but the everlasting possession of the good?' 'That must be added too.' 'Then love,' she said, 'may be described generally as the love of the everlasting possession of the good?' 'That is most true.'

'Then if this be the nature of love, can you tell me further,' she said, 'what is the manner of the pursuit? what are they doing who show all this eagerness and heat which is called love? and what is the object which they have in view? Answer me.' 'Nay, Diotima,' I replied, 'if I had known, I should not have wondered at your wisdom, neither should I have come to learn from you about this very matter.' 'Well,' she said, 'I will teach you:—The object which they have in view is birth in beauty, whether of body or soul.' 'I do not understand you,' I said; 'the oracle requires an explanation.' 'I will make my meaning clearer,' she replied. 'I mean to say, that all men are bringing to the birth in their bodies and in their souls. There is a certain age at which human nature is desirous of procreation—procreation which must be in beauty and not in deformity; and this procreation is the union of man and woman, and is a divine thing; for conception and generation are an immortal principle in the mortal creature, and in the inharmonious they can never be. But the deformed is always inharmonious with the divine, and the beautiful harmonious. Beauty, then, is the destiny or goddess of parturition who presides at birth, and therefore, when approaching beauty, the conceiving power is propitious, and diffusive, and benign, and begets and bears fruit: at the sight of ugliness she frowns and contracts and has a sense of pain, and turns away, and shrivels up, and not without a pang refrains from conception. And this is the reason why, when the hour of conception arrives, and the teeming nature is full, there is such a flutter and ecstasy about beauty whose approach is the alleviation of the pain of travail. For love, Socrates, is not, as you imagine, the love of the beautiful only.' 'What then?' 'The love of generation and of birth in beauty.' 'Yes,' I said. 'Yes, indeed,' she replied. 'But why of generation?' 'Because to the mortal creature, generation is a sort of eternity and immortality,' she replied; 'and if, as has been already admitted, love is of the everlasting possession of the good, all men will necessarily desire immortality together with good: Wherefore love is of immortality.'

All this she taught me at various times when she spoke of love. And I remember her once saying to me, 'What is the cause, Socrates, of love, and the attendant desire? See you not how all animals, birds, as well as beasts, in their desire of procreation, are in agony when they take the infection of love, which begins with the desire of union; whereto is added the care of offspring, on whose behalf the weakest are ready to battle against the strongest even to the uttermost, and to die for them, and will let themselves be tormented with hunger or suffer anything in order to maintain their young. Man may be supposed to act thus from reason; but why should animals have these passionate feelings? Can you tell me why?' Again I replied that I did not know. She said to me: 'And do you expect ever to become a master in the art of love, if you do not know this?' 'But I have told you already, Diotima, that my ignorance is the reason why I come to you; for I am conscious that I want a teacher; tell me then the cause of this and of the other mysteries of love.' 'Marvel not,' she said, 'if you believe that love is of the immortal, as we have several times acknowledged; for here again, and on the same principle too, the mortal nature is seeking as far as is possible to be everlasting and immortal: and this is only to be attained by generation, because generation always leaves behind a new existence in the place of the old. Nay even in the life of the same individual there is succession and not absolute unity: a man is called the same, and yet in the short interval which elapses between youth and age, and in which every animal is said to have life and identity, he is undergoing a perpetual process of loss and reparation—hair, flesh, bones, blood, and the whole body are always changing. Which is true not only of the body, but also of the soul, whose habits, tempers, opinions, desires, pleasures, pains, fears, never remain the same in any one of us, but are always coming and going; and equally true of knowledge, and what is still more surprising to us mortals, not only do the sciences in general spring up and decay, so that in respect of them we are never the same; but each of them individually experiences a like change. For what is implied in the word "recollection," but the departure of knowledge, which is ever being forgotten, and is renewed and preserved

by recollection, and appears to be the same although in reality new, according to that law of succession by which all mortal things are preserved, not absolutely the same, but by substitution, the old worn-out mortality leaving another new and similar existence behind—unlike the divine, which is always the same and not another? And in this way, Socrates, the mortal body, or mortal anything, partakes of immortality; but the immortal in another way. Marvel not then at the love which all men have of their offspring; for that universal love and interest is for the sake of immortality.'

I was astonished at her words, and said: 'Is this really true, O thou wise Diotima?' And she answered with all the authority of an accomplished sophist: 'Of that, Socrates, you may be assured;—think only of the ambition of men, and you will wonder at the senselessness of their ways, unless you consider how they are stirred by the love of an immortality of fame. They are ready to run all risks greater far than they would have run for their children, and to spend money and undergo any sort of toil, and even to die, for the sake of leaving behind them a name which shall be eternal. Do you imagine that Alcestis would have died to save Admetus, or Achilles to avenge Patroclus, or your own Codrus in order to preserve the kingdom for his sons, if they had not imagined that the memory of their virtues, which still survives among us, would be immortal? Nay,' she said, 'I am persuaded that all men do all things, and the better they are the more they do them, in hope of the glorious fame of immortal virtue; for they desire the immortal.

'Those who are pregnant in the body only, betake themselves to women and beget children—this is the character of their love; their offspring, as they hope, will preserve their memory and giving them the blessedness and immortality which they desire in the future. But souls which are pregnant—for there certainly are men who are more creative in their souls than in their bodies—conceive that which is proper for the soul to conceive or contain. And what are these conceptions?—wisdom and virtue in general. And such creators are poets and all artists who are deserving of the name inventor. But the greatest and fairest sort of wisdom by far is that which is concerned with the ordering of states and families, and which is called temperance and justice. And he who in youth has the seed of these implanted in him and is himself inspired, when he comes to maturity desires to beget and generate. He wanders about seeking beauty that he may beget offspring—for in deformity he will beget nothing—and naturally embraces the beautiful rather than the deformed body; above all when he finds a fair and noble and well-nurtured soul, he embraces the two in one person, and to such an one he is full of speech about virtue and the nature and pursuits of a good man; and he tries to educate him; and at the touch of the beautiful which is ever present to his memory, even when absent, he brings forth that which he had conceived long before, and in company with him tends that which he brings forth; and they are married by a far nearer tie and have a closer friendship than those who beget mortal children, for the children who are their common offspring are fairer and more immortal. Who, when he thinks of Homer and Hesiod and other great poets, would not rather have their children than ordinary human ones? Who would not emulate them in the creation of children such as theirs, which have preserved their memory and given them everlasting glory? Or who would not have such children as Lycurgus left behind him to be the saviours, not only of Lacedaemon, but of Hellas, as one may say? There is Solon, too, who is the revered father of Athenian laws; and many others there are in many other places, both among Hellenes and barbarians, who have given to the world many noble works, and have been the parents of virtue of every kind; and many temples have been raised in their honour for the sake of children such as theirs; which were never raised in honour of any one, for the sake of his mortal children.

'These are the lesser mysteries of love, into which even you, Socrates, may enter; to the greater and more hidden ones which are the crown of these, and to which, if you pursue them in a right spirit, they will lead, I know not whether you will be able to attain. But I will do my utmost to inform you, and do you follow if you can. For he who would proceed aright in this matter should begin in youth to visit beautiful forms; and first, if he be guided by his instructor aright, to love one such form only—out of that he should create fair

thoughts; and soon he will of himself perceive that the beauty of one form is akin to the beauty of another; and then if beauty of form in general is his pursuit, how foolish would he be not to recognize that the beauty in every form is and the same! And when he perceives this he will abate his violent love of the one, which he will despise and deem a small thing, and will become a lover of all beautiful forms; in the next stage he will consider that the beauty of the mind is more honourable than the beauty of the outward form. So that if a virtuous soul have but a little comeliness, he will be content to love and tend him, and will search out and bring to the birth thoughts which may improve the young, until he is compelled to contemplate and see the beauty of institutions and laws, and to understand that the beauty of them all is of one family, and that personal beauty is a trifle; and after laws and institutions he will go on to the sciences, that he may see their beauty, being not like a servant in love with the beauty of one youth or man or institution, himself a slave mean and narrow-minded, but drawing towards and contemplating the vast sea of beauty, he will create many fair and noble thoughts and notions in boundless love of wisdom; until on that shore he grows and waxes strong, and at last the vision is revealed to him of a single science, which is the science of beauty everywhere. To this I will proceed; please to give me your very best attention:

'He who has been instructed thus far in the things of love, and who has learned to see the beautiful in due order and succession, when he comes toward the end will suddenly perceive a nature of wondrous beauty (and this, Socrates, is the final cause of all our former toils)—a nature which in the first place is everlasting, not growing and decaying, or waxing and waning; secondly, not fair in one point of view and foul in another, or at one time or in one relation or at one place fair, at another time or in another relation or at another place foul, as if fair to some and foul to others, or in the likeness of a face or hands or any other part of the bodily frame, or in any form of speech or knowledge, or existing in any other being, as for example, in an animal, or in heaven, or in earth, or in any other place; but beauty absolute, separate, simple, and everlasting, which without diminution and without increase, or any change, is imparted to the ever-growing and perishing beauties of all other things. He who from these ascending under the influence of true love, begins to perceive that beauty, is not far from the end. And the true order of going, or being led by another, to the things of love, is to begin from the beauties of earth and mount upwards for the sake of that other beauty, using these as steps only, and from one going on to two, and from two to all fair forms, and from fair forms to fair practices, and from fair practices to fair notions, until from fair notions he arrives at the notion of absolute beauty, and at last knows what the essence of beauty is. This, my dear Socrates,' said the stranger of Mantineia, 'is that life above all others which man should live, in the contemplation of beauty absolute; a beauty which if you once beheld, you would see not to be after the measure of gold, and garments, and fair boys and youths, whose presence now entrances you; and you and many a one would be content to live seeing them only and conversing with them without meat or drink, if that were possible—you only want to look at them and to be with them. But what if man had eyes to see the true beauty—the divine beauty, I mean, pure and clear and unalloyed, not clogged with the pollutions of mortality and all the colours and vanities of human life—thither looking, and holding converse with the true beauty simple and divine? Remember how in that communion only, beholding beauty with the eye of the mind, he will be enabled to bring forth, not images of beauty, but realities (for he has hold not of an image but of a reality), and bringing forth and nourishing true virtue to become the friend of God and be immortal, if mortal man may. Would that be an ignoble life?'

Such, Phaedrus—and I speak not only to you, but to all of you—were the words of Diotima; and I am persuaded of their truth. And being persuaded of them, I try to persuade others, that in the attainment of this end human nature will not easily find a helper better than love: And therefore, also, I say that every man ought to honour him as I myself honour him, and walk in his ways, and exhort others to do the same, and praise the power and spirit of love according to the measure of my ability now and ever.

The words which I have spoken, you, Phaedrus, may call an encomium of love, or anything else which you please.

8. The Truth of Love: The Speech of Alcibiades and the end of the Symposium

About Plato, *Symposium*, pp. 212D -223D (to end of dialogue)

After Socrates ends his speech and as Aristophanes is about to reply to Socrates' speech, "there was a great knocking at the door of the house, as of revelers, and the sound of a flute-girl was heard." "A little while afterwards they heard the voice of Alcibiades resounding in the court; he was in a great state of intoxication ...." "'Hail, friends,' he said, appearing at the door crowned with a massive garland of ivy and violets, his head flowing with ribands. 'Will you have a very drunken man as a companion of your revels?"

And, with this Alcibiades enters, a flute-girl returns, and the symposium takes a very different turn.

Rather than say much prior to you reading this speech (although you should recall what was already said about Alcibiades), I am going to ask you to read this speech with a question in mind.

Not too long after his entrance, in the course of a little verbal tiff with Socrates (why are they arguing here?) Socrates asks Alcibiades what he is going to do, Alcibiades states, "I am going to speak the truth, if you will permit me."

Socrates replies, "I not only permit, but exhort you to speak the truth."

Alcibiades then says, "if I say anything which is not true, you may interrupt me if you will, and say 'that is a lie,' though my intention is to speak the truth."

Socrates never interrupts Alcibiades to say, "that is a lie."

> Plato seems to be intentionally signaling to his reader that Alcibiades is telling the truth. What truth is told by Alcibiades?
>
> And, when you finish the dialogue ask yourself, what truths, if any, are contained here? In *Symposium* Plato presents us with a complex and multi-faceted work on *eros*. What can you, reader of it some 2400 years after it was return learn about *eros*, love, philosophy, and life from reading it?

Plato, *Symposium*, pp. 212D-223D (to end of dialogue)

When Socrates had done speaking, the company applauded, and Aristophanes was beginning to say something in answer to the allusion which Socrates had made to his own speech, when suddenly there was a great knocking at the door of the house, as of revellers, and the sound of a flute-girl was heard. Agathon told the attendants to go and see who were the intruders. 'If they are friends of ours,' he said, 'invite them in, but if not, say that the drinking is over.' A little while afterwards they heard the voice of Alcibiades resounding in the court; he was in a great state of intoxication, and kept roaring and shouting 'Where is

Agathon? Lead me to Agathon,' and at length, supported by the flute-girl and some of his attendants, he found his way to them. 'Hail, friends,' he said, appearing at the door crowned with a massive garland of ivy and violets, his head flowing with ribands. 'Will you have a very drunken man as a companion of your revels? Or shall I crown Agathon, which was my intention in coming, and go away? For I was unable to come yesterday, and therefore I am here to-day, carrying on my head these ribands, that taking them from my own head, I may crown the head of this fairest and wisest of men, as I may be allowed to call him. Will you laugh at me because I am drunk? Yet I know very well that I am speaking the truth, although you may laugh. But first tell me; if I come in shall we have the understanding of which I spoke (supra Will you have a very drunken man? etc.)? Will you drink with me or not?'

The company were vociferous in begging that he would take his place among them, and Agathon specially invited him. Thereupon he was led in by the people who were with him; and as he was being led, intending to crown Agathon, he took the ribands from his own head and held them in front of his eyes; he was thus prevented from seeing Socrates, who made way for him, and Alcibiades took the vacant place between Agathon and Socrates, and in taking the place he embraced Agathon and crowned him. Take off his sandals, said Agathon, and let him make a third on the same couch.

By all means; but who makes the third partner in our revels? said Alcibiades, turning round and starting up as he caught sight of Socrates. By Heracles, he said, what is this? here is Socrates always lying in wait for me, and always, as his way is, coming out at all sorts of unsuspected places: and now, what have you to say for yourself, and why are you lying here, where I perceive that you have contrived to find a place, not by a joker or lover of jokes, like Aristophanes, but by the fairest of the company?

Socrates turned to Agathon and said: I must ask you to protect me, Agathon; for the passion of this man has grown quite a serious matter to me. Since I became his admirer I have never been allowed to speak to any other fair one, or so much as to look at them. If I do, he goes wild with envy and jealousy, and not only abuses me but can hardly keep his hands off me, and at this moment he may do me some harm. Please to see to this, and either reconcile me to him, or, if he attempts violence, protect me, as I am in bodily fear of his mad and passionate attempts.

There can never be reconciliation between you and me, said Alcibiades; but for the present I will defer your chastisement. And I must beg you, Agathon, to give me back some of the ribands that I may crown the marvellous head of this universal despot—I would not have him complain of me for crowning you, and neglecting him, who in conversation is the conqueror of all mankind; and this not only once, as you were the day before yesterday, but always. Whereupon, taking some of the ribands, he crowned Socrates, and again reclined.

Then he said: You seem, my friends, to be sober, which is a thing not to be endured; you must drink—for that was the agreement under which I was admitted—and I elect myself master of the feast until you are well drunk. Let us have a large goblet, Agathon, or rather, he said, addressing the attendant, bring me that wine-cooler. The wine-cooler which had caught his eye was a vessel holding more than two quarts—this he filled and emptied, and bade the attendant fill it again for Socrates. Observe, my friends, said Alcibiades, that this ingenious trick of mine will have no effect on Socrates, for he can drink any quantity of wine and not be at all nearer being drunk. Socrates drank the cup which the attendant filled for him.

Eryximachus said: What is this, Alcibiades? Are we to have neither conversation nor singing over our cups; but simply to drink as if we were thirsty?

Alcibiades replied: Hail, worthy son of a most wise and worthy sire!

The same to you, said Eryximachus; but what shall we do?

That I leave to you, said Alcibiades.

'The wise physician skilled our wounds to heal (from Pope's Homer, Il.)'

shall prescribe and we will obey. What do you want?

Well, said Eryximachus, before you appeared we had passed a resolution that each one of us in turn should make a speech in praise of love, and as good a one as he could: the turn was passed round from left to right; and as all of us have spoken, and you have not spoken but have well drunken, you ought to speak, and then impose upon Socrates any task which you please, and he on his right hand neighbour, and so on.

That is good, Eryximachus, said Alcibiades; and yet the comparison of a drunken man's speech with those of sober men is hardly fair; and I should like to know, sweet friend, whether you really believe what Socrates was just now saying; for I can assure you that the very reverse is the fact, and that if I praise any one but himself in his presence, whether God or man, he will hardly keep his hands off me.

For shame, said Socrates.

Hold your tongue, said Alcibiades, for by Poseidon, there is no one else whom I will praise when you are of the company.

Well then, said Eryximachus, if you like praise Socrates.

What do you think, Eryximachus? said Alcibiades: shall I attack him and inflict the punishment before you all?

What are you about? said Socrates; are you going to raise a laugh at my expense? Is that the meaning of your praise?

I am going to speak the truth, if you will permit me.

I not only permit, but exhort you to speak the truth.

Then I will begin at once, said Alcibiades, and if I say anything which is not true, you may interrupt me if you will, and say 'that is a lie,' though my intention is to speak the truth. But you must not wonder if I speak any how as things come into my mind; for the fluent and orderly enumeration of all your singularities is not a task which is easy to a man in my condition.

And now, my boys, I shall praise Socrates in a figure which will appear to him to be a caricature, and yet I speak, not to make fun of him, but only for the truth's sake. I say, that he is exactly like the busts of Silenus, which are set up in the statuaries' shops, holding pipes and flutes in their mouths; and they are made to open in the middle, and have images of gods inside them. I say also that he is like Marsyas the satyr. You yourself will not deny, Socrates, that your face is like that of a satyr. Aye, and there is a resemblance in other points too. For example, you are a bully, as I can prove by witnesses, if you will not confess. And are you not a flute-player? That you are, and a performer far more wonderful than Marsyas. He indeed with instruments used to charm the souls of men by the power of his breath, and the players of his music do so still: for the melodies of Olympus (compare Arist. Pol.) are derived from Marsyas who taught them, and these, whether they are played by a great master or by a miserable flute-girl, have a power which no others have; they alone possess the soul and reveal the wants of those who have need of gods and mysteries, because they are divine. But you produce the same effect with your words only, and do not require the flute: that is the difference between you and him. When we hear any other speaker, even a very good one, he produces absolutely no effect upon us, or not much, whereas the mere fragments of you and your words, even at second-hand, and however imperfectly repeated, amaze and possess the souls of every man, woman, and

child who comes within hearing of them. And if I were not afraid that you would think me hopelessly drunk, I would have sworn as well as spoken to the influence which they have always had and still have over me. For my heart leaps within me more than that of any Corybantian reveller, and my eyes rain tears when I hear them. And I observe that many others are affected in the same manner. I have heard Pericles and other great orators, and I thought that they spoke well, but I never had any similar feeling; my soul was not stirred by them, nor was I angry at the thought of my own slavish state. But this Marsyas has often brought me to such a pass, that I have felt as if I could hardly endure the life which I am leading (this, Socrates, you will admit); and I am conscious that if I did not shut my ears against him, and fly as from the voice of the siren, my fate would be like that of others,—he would transfix me, and I should grow old sitting at his feet. For he makes me confess that I ought not to live as I do, neglecting the wants of my own soul, and busying myself with the concerns of the Athenians; therefore I hold my ears and tear myself away from him. And he is the only person who ever made me ashamed, which you might think not to be in my nature, and there is no one else who does the same. For I know that I cannot answer him or say that I ought not to do as he bids, but when I leave his presence the love of popularity gets the better of me. And therefore I run away and fly from him, and when I see him I am ashamed of what I have confessed to him. Many a time have I wished that he were dead, and yet I know that I should be much more sorry than glad, if he were to die: so that I am at my wit's end.

And this is what I and many others have suffered from the flute-playing of this satyr. Yet hear me once more while I show you how exact the image is, and how marvellous his power. For let me tell you; none of you know him; but I will reveal him to you; having begun, I must go on. See you how fond he is of the fair? He is always with them and is always being smitten by them, and then again he knows nothing and is ignorant of all things—such is the appearance which he puts on. Is he not like a Silenus in this? To be sure he is: his outer mask is the carved head of the Silenus; but, O my companions in drink, when he is opened, what temperance there is residing within! Know you that beauty and wealth and honour, at which the many wonder, are of no account with him, and are utterly despised by him: he regards not at all the persons who are gifted with them; mankind are nothing to him; all his life is spent in mocking and flouting at them. But when I opened him, and looked within at his serious purpose, I saw in him divine and golden images of such fascinating beauty that I was ready to do in a moment whatever Socrates commanded: they may have escaped the observation of others, but I saw them. Now I fancied that he was seriously enamoured of my beauty, and I thought that I should therefore have a grand opportunity of hearing him tell what he knew, for I had a wonderful opinion of the attractions of my youth. In the prosecution of this design, when I next went to him, I sent away the attendant who usually accompanied me (I will confess the whole truth, and beg you to listen; and if I speak falsely, do you, Socrates, expose the falsehood). Well, he and I were alone together, and I thought that when there was nobody with us, I should hear him speak the language which lovers use to their loves when they are by themselves, and I was delighted. Nothing of the sort; he conversed as usual, and spent the day with me and then went away. Afterwards I challenged him to the palaestra; and he wrestled and closed with me several times when there was no one present; I fancied that I might succeed in this manner. Not a bit; I made no way with him. Lastly, as I had failed hitherto, I thought that I must take stronger measures and attack him boldly, and, as I had begun, not give him up, but see how matters stood between him and me. So I invited him to sup with me, just as if he were a fair youth, and I a designing lover. He was not easily persuaded to come; he did, however, after a while accept the invitation, and when he came the first time, he wanted to go away at once as soon as supper was over, and I had not the face to detain him. The second time, still in pursuance of my design, after we had supped, I went on conversing far into the night, and when he wanted to go away, I pretended that the hour was late and that he had much better remain. So he lay down on the couch next to me, the same on which he had supped, and there was no one but ourselves sleeping in the apartment. All this may be told without shame to any one. But what follows I could hardly tell you if I were sober. Yet as the proverb says, 'In vino veritas,' whether

with boys, or without them (In allusion to two proverbs.); and therefore I must speak. Nor, again, should I be justified in concealing the lofty actions of Socrates when I come to praise him. Moreover I have felt the serpent's sting; and he who has suffered, as they say, is willing to tell his fellow-sufferers only, as they alone will be likely to understand him, and will not be extreme in judging of the sayings or doings which have been wrung from his agony. For I have been bitten by a more than viper's tooth; I have known in my soul, or in my heart, or in some other part, that worst of pangs, more violent in ingenuous youth than any serpent's tooth, the pang of philosophy, which will make a man say or do anything. And you whom I see around me, Phaedrus and Agathon and Eryximachus and Pausanias and Aristodemus and Aristophanes, all of you, and I need not say Socrates himself, have had experience of the same madness and passion in your longing after wisdom. Therefore listen and excuse my doings then and my sayings now. But let the attendants and other profane and unmannered persons close up the doors of their ears.

When the lamp was put out and the servants had gone away, I thought that I must be plain with him and have no more ambiguity. So I gave him a shake, and I said: 'Socrates, are you asleep?' 'No,' he said. 'Do you know what I am meditating? 'What are you meditating?' he said. 'I think,' I replied, 'that of all the lovers whom I have ever had you are the only one who is worthy of me, and you appear to be too modest to speak. Now I feel that I should be a fool to refuse you this or any other favour, and therefore I come to lay at your feet all that I have and all that my friends have, in the hope that you will assist me in the way of virtue, which I desire above all things, and in which I believe that you can help me better than any one else. And I should certainly have more reason to be ashamed of what wise men would say if I were to refuse a favour to such as you, than of what the world, who are mostly fools, would say of me if I granted it.' To these words he replied in the ironical manner which is so characteristic of him:—'Alcibiades, my friend, you have indeed an elevated aim if what you say is true, and if there really is in me any power by which you may become better; truly you must see in me some rare beauty of a kind infinitely higher than any which I see in you. And therefore, if you mean to share with me and to exchange beauty for beauty, you will have greatly the advantage of me; you will gain true beauty in return for appearance—like Diomede, gold in exchange for brass. But look again, sweet friend, and see whether you are not deceived in me. The mind begins to grow critical when the bodily eye fails, and it will be a long time before you get old.' Hearing this, I said: 'I have told you my purpose, which is quite serious, and do you consider what you think best for you and me.' 'That is good,' he said; 'at some other time then we will consider and act as seems best about this and about other matters.' Whereupon, I fancied that he was smitten, and that the words which I had uttered like arrows had wounded him, and so without waiting to hear more I got up, and throwing my coat about him crept under his threadbare cloak, as the time of year was winter, and there I lay during the whole night having this wonderful monster in my arms. This again, Socrates, will not be denied by you. And yet, notwithstanding all, he was so superior to my solicitations, so contemptuous and derisive and disdainful of my beauty—which really, as I fancied, had some attractions—hear, O judges; for judges you shall be of the haughty virtue of Socrates—nothing more happened, but in the morning when I awoke (let all the gods and goddesses be my witnesses) I arose as from the couch of a father or an elder brother.

What do you suppose must have been my feelings, after this rejection, at the thought of my own dishonour? And yet I could not help wondering at his natural temperance and self-restraint and manliness. I never imagined that I could have met with a man such as he is in wisdom and endurance. And therefore I could not be angry with him or renounce his company, any more than I could hope to win him. For I well knew that if Ajax could not be wounded by steel, much less he by money; and my only chance of captivating him by my personal attractions had failed. So I was at my wit's end; no one was ever more hopelessly enslaved by another. All this happened before he and I went on the expedition to Potidaea; there we messed together, and I had the opportunity of observing his extraordinary power of sustaining fatigue. His endurance was simply marvellous when, being cut off from our supplies, we were compelled to go without food—on such occasions, which often happen in time of war, he was superior not only to me but to

everybody; there was no one to be compared to him. Yet at a festival he was the only person who had any real powers of enjoyment; though not willing to drink, he could if compelled beat us all at that,—wonderful to relate! no human being had ever seen Socrates drunk; and his powers, if I am not mistaken, will be tested before long. His fortitude in enduring cold was also surprising. There was a severe frost, for the winter in that region is really tremendous, and everybody else either remained indoors, or if they went out had on an amazing quantity of clothes, and were well shod, and had their feet swathed in felt and fleeces: in the midst of this, Socrates with his bare feet on the ice and in his ordinary dress marched better than the other soldiers who had shoes, and they looked daggers at him because he seemed to despise them.

I have told you one tale, and now I must tell you another, which is worth hearing,

'Of the doings and sufferings of the enduring man'

while he was on the expedition. One morning he was thinking about something which he could not resolve; he would not give it up, but continued thinking from early dawn until noon—there he stood fixed in thought; and at noon attention was drawn to him, and the rumour ran through the wondering crowd that Socrates had been standing and thinking about something ever since the break of day. At last, in the evening after supper, some Ionians out of curiosity (I should explain that this was not in winter but in summer), brought out their mats and slept in the open air that they might watch him and see whether he would stand all night. There he stood until the following morning; and with the return of light he offered up a prayer to the sun, and went his way (compare supra). I will also tell, if you please—and indeed I am bound to tell—of his courage in battle; for who but he saved my life? Now this was the engagement in which I received the prize of valour: for I was wounded and he would not leave me, but he rescued me and my arms; and he ought to have received the prize of valour which the generals wanted to confer on me partly on account of my rank, and I told them so, (this, again, Socrates will not impeach or deny), but he was more eager than the generals that I and not he should have the prize. There was another occasion on which his behaviour was very remarkable—in the flight of the army after the battle of Delium, where he served among the heavy-armed,—I had a better opportunity of seeing him than at Potidaea, for I was myself on horseback, and therefore comparatively out of danger. He and Laches were retreating, for the troops were in flight, and I met them and told them not to be discouraged, and promised to remain with them; and there you might see him, Aristophanes, as you describe (Aristoph. Clouds), just as he is in the streets of Athens, stalking like a pelican, and rolling his eyes, calmly contemplating enemies as well as friends, and making very intelligible to anybody, even from a distance, that whoever attacked him would be likely to meet with a stout resistance; and in this way he and his companion escaped—for this is the sort of man who is never touched in war; those only are pursued who are running away headlong. I particularly observed how superior he was to Laches in presence of mind. Many are the marvels which I might narrate in praise of Socrates; most of his ways might perhaps be paralleled in another man, but his absolute unlikeness to any human being that is or ever has been is perfectly astonishing. You may imagine Brasidas and others to have been like Achilles; or you may imagine Nestor and Antenor to have been like Pericles; and the same may be said of other famous men, but of this strange being you will never be able to find any likeness, however remote, either among men who now are or who ever have been—other than that which I have already suggested of Silenus and the satyrs; and they represent in a figure not only himself, but his words. For, although I forgot to mention this to you before, his words are like the images of Silenus which open; they are ridiculous when you first hear them; he clothes himself in language that is like the skin of the wanton satyr—for his talk is of pack-asses and smiths and cobblers and curriers, and he is always repeating the same things in the same words (compare Gorg.), so that any ignorant or inexperienced person might feel disposed to laugh at him; but he who opens the bust and sees what is within will find that they are the only words which have a meaning in them, and also the most divine, abounding in fair images of virtue, and of the widest comprehension, or rather extending to the whole duty of a good and honourable man.

This, friends, is my praise of Socrates. I have added my blame of him for his ill-treatment of me; and he has ill-treated not only me, but Charmides the son of Glaucon, and Euthydemus the son of Diocles, and many others in the same way—beginning as their lover he has ended by making them pay their addresses to him. Wherefore I say to you, Agathon, 'Be not deceived by him; learn from me and take warning, and do not be a fool and learn by experience, as the proverb says.'

When Alcibiades had finished, there was a laugh at his outspokenness; for he seemed to be still in love with Socrates. You are sober, Alcibiades, said Socrates, or you would never have gone so far about to hide the purpose of your satyr's praises, for all this long story is only an ingenious circumlocution, of which the point comes in by the way at the end; you want to get up a quarrel between me and Agathon, and your notion is that I ought to love you and nobody else, and that you and you only ought to love Agathon. But the plot of this Satyric or Silenic drama has been detected, and you must not allow him, Agathon, to set us at variance.

I believe you are right, said Agathon, and I am disposed to think that his intention in placing himself between you and me was only to divide us; but he shall gain nothing by that move; for I will go and lie on the couch next to you.

Yes, yes, replied Socrates, by all means come here and lie on the couch below me.

Alas, said Alcibiades, how I am fooled by this man; he is determined to get the better of me at every turn. I do beseech you, allow Agathon to lie between us.

Certainly not, said Socrates, as you praised me, and I in turn ought to praise my neighbour on the right, he will be out of order in praising me again when he ought rather to be praised by me, and I must entreat you to consent to this, and not be jealous, for I have a great desire to praise the youth.

Hurrah! cried Agathon, I will rise instantly, that I may be praised by Socrates.

The usual way, said Alcibiades; where Socrates is, no one else has any chance with the fair; and now how readily has he invented a specious reason for attracting Agathon to himself.

Agathon arose in order that he might take his place on the couch by Socrates, when suddenly a band of revellers entered, and spoiled the order of the banquet. Some one who was going out having left the door open, they had found their way in, and made themselves at home; great confusion ensued, and every one was compelled to drink large quantities of wine. Aristodemus said that Eryximachus, Phaedrus, and others went away—he himself fell asleep, and as the nights were long took a good rest: he was awakened towards daybreak by a crowing of cocks, and when he awoke, the others were either asleep, or had gone away; there remained only Socrates, Aristophanes, and Agathon, who were drinking out of a large goblet which they passed round, and Socrates was discoursing to them. Aristodemus was only half awake, and he did not hear the beginning of the discourse; the chief thing which he remembered was Socrates compelling the other two to acknowledge that the genius of comedy was the same with that of tragedy, and that the true artist in tragedy was an artist in comedy also. To this they were constrained to assent, being drowsy, and not quite following the argument. And first of all Aristophanes dropped off, then, when the day was already dawning, Agathon. Socrates, having laid them to sleep, rose to depart; Aristodemus, as his manner was, following him. At the Lyceum he took a bath, and passed the day as usual. In the evening he retired to rest at his own home.

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B. The Question to the Way: Zhuangzi and the Disputers of the Tao

1. Disputers of the *Dao*

Background to the *Zhuangzi* in ancient Chinese philosophy[1]

Chinese philosophy, like Greek and South Asian ("Indian"[2]) philosophy, has a written philosophical tradition that has lasted for millennia. Like Ancient Greek philosophy, its origins are a time of social and political turmoil. Like the Greeks, the original Chinese philosophers were interested in creating an ethical, social, and political system that would provide a means to cope with the vicissitudes of quotidian existence and to enable individuals to gain virtue or power. The ancient Chinese were particularly concerned with social and political stability. In part this is because of the importance in Chinese thought of the "reign of heaven." This is a notion of the whole of the universe united under the governance of the cosmic order of heaven. Such an ordered universe would include a properly governed Chinese empire under the rule of an emperor who governed according to the "mandate of heaven, 天命."

Chinese philosophy develops over the course of what are called the "Spring and Autumn" and "Warring States" periods. Under the called the "Spring and Autumn" period (approximately 771 to 476 BCE) the Eastern Zhao Dynasty, gradually lost much of its political power and authority. Regional feudal rulers gained more autonomy from the centralized power of the Zhou and warred with one and other for power and territory. In the "Warring States" period (approximately 476 to 221 BCE) which followed, the dissolution of centralized power reached its nadir, and the so-called "King of Zhou" was essentially a figurehead for a unified China without any real power or authority. There was no unifying, ordering emperor governing according to the mandate of heaven. This period of conflict and division ended with the Qin dynasty's victory over the other competing states and the emergence of a unified Imperial China. Ancient China during the Eastern Zhou was thus full of competing fiefdoms[3] that fought with each other for power and wealth. This disunity and the struggles of small lords violated "the mandate of heaven." At the root of the notion of this mandate is *Tiān* (天) "heaven" or the inherent order in the cosmos. A society divided by many competing and warring states

1. The notion of "the disputers of the Tao" was the title of book by A.C. Graham that traced the early history of Chinese thought as it was constructed around the notion of the Tao. And remember from the "Introduction" that we are in the slightly awkward situation of two different transliteration systems for Classical Chinese. Many earlier translations use "Tao" where today the official Chinese translation "Dao." The same is the case with "Te" and De." Both "Tao" and "Dao" are transliterations of "道." Both "Te" and "De" are transliterations of 德." For more discussion of this see: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Daoism–Taoism_romanization_issue
2. "Indian Philosophy" and "South Asian Philosophy" are near synonyms. "South Asia" refers to the geographic region that consists of the modern nation states of Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka. India is one of the nation states within the South Asia geographic region. The philosophical traditions that arose and developed in South Asia may be traced through Jainism to the Indus Valley Civilization (2600-1900 BCE). Some of the most important philosophical concepts of South Asian philosophy such as dharma, karma, samsara, moksha, and ahimsa can be traced to the *Upanishads* and the *Vedas* which may have originated in the late Vedic period (1000-500 BCE). The *Upanishads* and the *Vedas* foundational texts in the development in Hinduism and Hindu philosophy. Buddhism originally developed out of Hinduism. I use "South Asian Philosophy" because it refers to a geographical region that extends beyond the current borders of the nation state of India. This is an ancient, complex, profound and deeply contested philosophical and cultural tradition.
3. "Fiefdom comes from the word "fief" which is an estate unit of land that is held by an overlord. Those who serve under the lord are vassals and they owe fealty or duty of service and payments to the overlord. The root of both "fief" is from the French for "fee." The notion of a fief comes from medieval European feudalism and is loosely applied to ancient China.

was not orderly and thus was characterized by a collapse of the structure that heaven should give to people's lives.

The Warring States of China, 200 B.C.

The great philosopher whose writings came to be seen as the preeminent discourse, teaching, or "way" of living and ruling according to heaven's order, was Confucius (ca. 551–479 BCE). Confucius' work dates from the Spring and Autumn period (春秋時代). The thought of Confucius has been one of the most influential and long lasting continuous philosophical tradition in the history of humanity. Although Taoism, Buddhism, and competing philosophical traditions have at various times been profoundly important in East Asian thought, Confucianism is still a dominant philosophy in China, Korea, and other parts of East Asia.

Some of the core notions of Confucian thought that we will encounter in our reading of the Zhuangzi are:

仁 *Ren* (Humanity) Fulfilling one's responsibility towards others

義*Yi* (Responsibility; Righteousness; Reciprocity) This means understanding that each individual lives in a society defined by social relations

禮*Li* (Proper Conduct of Ritual Propriety) More generally Li is principle or rule. This relates to ritual because ritual is what binds society and proper performance of ritual is part of keeping these bonds stable. In ritual we participate in and maintain the order of the universe. In Chinese thought and practice such ritual is secular as well as religious. It is built into the patterns that structure our way of life. An example would be a college's commencement ceremony.

孝*Xiao* (Filial Piety) Each of us is the product of a family and proper duty and obedience to the male head of the family is essential to familial and societal stability.

In this book we are going to focus on a philosophy that developed as alternative to Confucianism and that is Daoism (Taoism). Daoism is both a religious tradition (religious Taoism) and a philosophical tradition. In China and other parts of East Asia religious Daoism is the more common manifestation of Daoism. However, Daoist philosophy has had an enormous influence in European and American society. This is largely credited to the popularity of the *Dao De Jing* (Tao Te Ching) which is credited to a likely mythical author Laozi.[4] This popularity has led to works such as the *Tao of Pooh*, by Benjamin Hoff.

Daoism developed from a variety of writings, including the *Dao De Jing* that presented a perspective on the *Dao* or the mandate of heaven that is critical of Confucianism and, in many respects, fundamental at odds with the Confucian tradition. The core notions of Confucianism were rejected or fundamentally altered by the writers of these texts. When these writing were gathered they came to constitute an alternative philosophical system to Confucianism that includes metaphysical, epistemological, and moral assertions.

Instead of reading sections of the *Dao De Jing*, I am going to have you read the *Zhuangzi* (Chuang Tzu) by Zhuang Zhou. Both the *Dao De Jing* and the *Zhuangzi* were composed during the Warring States period (475 to 221 BCE) which was the second part of the Eastern Zhou dynasty. Traditionally Laozi was seen as a contemporary of Confucius and thus the *Dao De Jing* was viewed as the more ancient text. Scholars now mostly agree that the *Dao De Jing* is a compilation of variety of texts some of which were written later than the "Inner Chapters" of the *Zhuangzi*. You will be reading 6 of the 7 "Inner Chapters."

At the core of the both the *Dao De Jing* and the *Zhuangzi* is the notion of 道 ***Dao*** (Tao). *Dao* can be translated as way, course, "guiding discourse." It is the path one should follow if one is to attain 德 ***De*** (*Te*). "*De*" can be translated as virtuosity or power or virtue. In many ways it can be seen as similar to the Greek *arete*.

As you read the *Zhuangzi* you will encounter a text that is likely unlike anything you have read before. You may very well be confused and find that it makes little sense. Some pointers are to first understand that these are fables or little stories that are full of metaphor. There are certain themes that recur. These will be pointed out. Read the assigned chapters multiple times; they are all pretty short. And have the text with you in class. This is particularly important with this reading.

Also, Chinese is a character-based language, not an alphabetical language like English or Greek. The characters are composed of pen strokes called "radicals." In some cases, especially with simple characters, the character in some ways looks like the meaning of the word. Words can be built up out of multiple characters and this allows for visual/verbal jokes and that metaphors that are invisible in the English translations. I will point out a few of these.

4. "zi" is an honorific appended to a name. Thus, "Laozi" means something like "honorable Lao." And Zhuangzi (or Zhuang Zhou).

A simple example of this the character for "*Ren*" (仁). 仁 is composed of two parts:

"人" (meaning "person" or "people")

"二" (meaning "two")

Note that in both cases the character resembles the thing it refers to. "人" can be seen as a very simple sketch of a person standing. "二" is two horizontal strokes.

Putting them together, the etymological meaning of 仁 is "two people/persons." Two people is the smallest society/social unit. So, the original meaning of the word is the proper relationship between people. Later usage of the word, particularly in Confucian context, made its meaning more complex. *Ren* becomes a virtue, a character, the ultimate goal of human life. As used in some contexts it can even be compared to some sort of spiritual enlightenment).

Here we see how two simple radicals that pictorially portray the basic concert they refer to are combined to form a more complex concept. This more complex is then developed in Chinese thought into an exceeding important philosophical, social and religious ideal.

For much more information on this see: The Chinese Text Project at https://ctext.org/dictionary.pl?if=en

2. Chapter 1, *Zhuangzi*

Prior to reading Chapter 1 of the *Zhaungzi,* observe how much the chapter title changes from translation to translation:

Here is the title of Chapter 1 in Chinese characters:

逍遙遊

Here are three Chapter 1 title translations:

"Enjoyment in Untroubled Ease" (Legge translation)

"Wandering Far and Unfettered" (Ziporyn translation)

"Going rambling without a destination" (Graham translation)

Do you see any similarity between these three translations? Are they conceptually related?

After you have read this chapter come up with your own title and briefly explain why this is an appropriate title for the chapter.

Also, as you read try to discover and follow these themes:

1. Wandering or rambling

In what ways is this section about wandering?

How is wandering contrasted with staying in the same place?

Are there virtues to wandering? What are they?

Are there virtues in staying in the same place? What are they?

2. Transformation. The *Zhuangzi* is full of one thing turning to another and it starts with an instance of such a transformation. What is this transformation?

Give another example of of an object that undergoes transformation in this chapter.

Give an example of an idea or concept or the way we think about things undergoes transformation in this chapter. How is this transformation significant?

Give an example of a significant transformation in your own life. Why is this transformation significant?

3. The contrast between that which is big and that which is small.

What are examples of large and small things in Chapter One? How does being large and being small change one's perspective? Is there a virtue in being large? Is there a virtue in being small?

4. The usefulness of useless things.

Is there an example in Chapter One of something that is useless transforming into something useful? What brings about this transformation?

Can you give an example from your own life of something being transformed from being useless to being useful? What about something being transformed from being useful to being useless? What brings about these changes?

These are themes and metaphors for some core philosophical notions in the Zhuangzi. They all connect to the importance of perspective and the ubiquity of change. As you go from one place to another, as you change, as you see things from different vantage both the seer and the seen become different. The second alludes to the power of doing by not doing.

Zhuangzi, Inner Chapters, C. 1

Translated by James Legge

In the Northern Ocean there is a fish, the name of which is Kun.[5] *– I do not know how many li*[6] *in size. It changes into a bird with the name of Peng 鵬,*[7] *the back of which is (also) – I do not know how many li*

5. 鯤 In his translation if the Zhuangzi, Brook Ziporyn notes that this character is construted from the radical for fish set beside the radical that means "elder brother." Literally it translates to "fish egg." This is, then, a Chinese character that presents a visual/verbal pun that means "fish egg-elder brother." It is the first of the many such verbal/visual puns in the Zhuangzi.
6. In China a li is a traditional measurement unit of distance. In ancient China the li was not a standardized measurement and varied over time and place. It was approximately 1/3 of a mile. It is now standardized as 500 meters.
7. 鵬, like "Kun" is a visual pun. It has the same linguistic root as the mythical Chinese phoenix. However, again as noted by Ziporyn, Zhuangzi puts this in

in extent. When this bird rouses itself and flies, its wings are like clouds all round the sky. When the sea is moved (so as to bear it along), it prepares to remove to the Southern Ocean. The Southern Ocean is the Pool of Heaven.

There is the (book called) Qi Xie, a record of marvels. We have in it these words: 'When the Peng is removing to the Southern Ocean it flaps (its wings) on the water for 3000 li. Then it ascends on a whirlwind 90,000 li, and it rests only at the end of six months.' (But similar to this is the movement of the breezes which we call) the horses of the fields, of the dust (which quivers in the sunbeams), and of living things as they are blown against one another by the air. Is its azure the proper colour of the sky? Or is it occasioned by its distance and illimitable extent? If one were looking down (from above), the very same appearance would just meet his view.[8]

And moreover, (to speak of) the accumulation of water; if it be not great, it will not have strength to support a large boat. Upset a cup of water in a cavity, and a straw will float on it as if it were a boat. Place a cup in it, and it will stick fast; the water is shallow and the boat is large. (So, it is with) the accumulation of wind; if it be not great, it will not have strength to support great wings. Therefore (the Peng ascended to) the height of 90,000 li, and there was such a mass of wind beneath it; thenceforth the accumulation of wind was sufficient. As it seemed to bear the blue sky on its back, and there was nothing to obstruct or arrest its course, it could pursue its way to the South.

A cicada and a little dove laughed at it, saying, 'We make an effort and fly towards an elm or sapanwood tree; and sometimes before we reach it, we can do no more but drop to the ground. Of what use is it for this (creature) to rise 90,000 li, and make for the South?' He who goes to the grassy suburbs, returning to the third meal (of the day), will have his belly as full as when he set out; he who goes to a distance of 100 li will have to pound his grain where he stops for the night; he who goes a thousand li, will have to carry with him provisions for three months. What should these two small creatures know about the matter? The knowledge of that which is small does not reach to that which is great; (the experience of) a few years does not reach to that of many. How do we know that it is so? The mushroom of a morning does not know (what takes place between) the beginning and end of a month; the short-lived cicada does not know (what takes place between) the spring and autumn. These are instances of a short term of life. In the south of Chu there is the (tree) called Ming-ling, whose spring is 500 years, and its autumn the same; in high antiquity there was that called Da-chun, whose spring was 8000 years, and its autumn the same. And Peng Zu is the one man renowned to the present day for his length of life: if all men were (to wish) to match him, would they not be miserable?

In the questions put by Tang to Ji we have similar statements: 'In the bare and barren north there is the dark and vast ocean – the Pool of Heaven. In it there is a fish, several thousand li in breadth, while no one knows its length. Its name is the kun. There is (also) a bird named the peng; its back is like the Tai mountain, while its wings are like clouds all round the sky. On a whirlwind it mounts upwards as on the whorls of a goat's horn for 90,000 li, till, far removed from the cloudy vapours, it bears on its back the blue sky, and then it shapes its course for the South, and proceeds to the ocean there.' A quail by the side of a marsh laughed at it, and said, 'Where is it going to? I spring up with a bound, and come down again when I have reached but a few fathoms, and then fly about among the brushwood and bushes; and this is the perfection of flying. Where is that creature going to?' This shows the difference between the small and the great.

phonetic form so that the pronunciation of this word is like the pronunciation of the character for "peer" or "friend." So this character might be "phoenix friend." This, though, is a odds with the great difference between Peng and the cicada and little dove that are unable to comprehend Peng's vastnesss.

8. Note the various analogies in this paragraph. Peng is like "horse clouds," dust motes and the blue of the sky. Then, in the next paragraph, a vast ship floating on an even vaster sea.

Thus it is that men, whose wisdom[9] *is sufficient for the duties of some one office, or whose conduct will secure harmony in some one district, or whose virtue [de] is befitting a ruler so that they could efficiently govern some one state, are sure to look on themselves in this manner (like the quail), and yet Rongzi of Song would have smiled and laughed at them. (This Rongzi), though the whole world should have praised him, would not for that have stimulated himself to greater endeavour, and though the whole world should have condemned him, would not have exercised any more repression of his course; so fixed was he in the difference between the internal (judgment of himself) and the external (judgment of others), so distinctly had he marked out the bounding limit of glory and disgrace. Here, however, he stopped. His place in the world indeed had become indifferent to him, but still he had not planted himself firmly (in the right position). There was Liezi, who rode on the wind and pursued his way, with an admirable indifference (to all external things), returning, however, after fifteen days, (to his place). In regard to the things that (are supposed to) contribute to happiness, he was free from all endeavours to obtain them; but though he had not to walk, there was still something for which he had to wait.*

But suppose one who mounts on (the ether of) heaven and earth in its normal operation, and drives along the six elemental energies of the changing (seasons), thus enjoying himself in the illimitable – what has he to wait for? Therefore, it is said, 'The Perfect man has no (thought of) self; the Spirit-like man, none of merit; the sagely-minded man, none of fame.'

Yao, proposing to resign the throne to Xu You, said, 'When the sun and moon have come forth, if the torches have not been put out, would it not be difficult for them to give light? When the seasonal rains are coming down, if we still keep watering the ground, will not our toil be labour lost for all the good it will do? Do you, Master, stand forth (as sovereign), and the kingdom will (at once) be well governed. If I still (continue to) preside over it, I must look on myself as vainly occupying the place – I beg to resign the throne to you.' Xu You said, 'You, Sir, govern the kingdom, and the kingdom is well governed. If I in these circumstances take your place, shall I not be doing so for the sake of the name? But the name is but the guest of the reality; shall I be playing the part of the guest? The tailor-bird makes its nest in the deep forest, but only uses a single branch; the mole drinks from the He, but only takes what fills its belly. Return and rest in being ruler – I will have nothing to do with the throne. Though the cook were not attending to his kitchen, the representative of the dead and the officer of prayer would not leave their cups and stands to take his place.'

Jian Wu asked Lian Shu, saying, 'I heard Jie Yu talking words which were great, but had nothing corresponding to them (in reality); once gone, they could not be brought back. I was frightened by them; they were like the Milky Way which cannot be traced to its beginning or end. They had no connexion with one another, and were not akin to the experiences of men.' 'What were his words?' asked Lian Shu, and the other replied, (He said) that 'Far away on the hill of Gu Ye there dwelt a Spirit-like man ["spirit-men" appear through the Zhuangzi; they are individuals whose de is so great that they have almost supernatural power] whose flesh and skin were (smooth) as ice and (white) as snow; that his manner was elegant and delicate as that of a virgin; that he did not eat any of the five grains, but inhaled the wind and drank the dew; that he mounted on the clouds, drove along the flying dragons, rambling and enjoying himself beyond the four seas; that by the concentration of his spirit-like powers he could save men from disease and pestilence, and secure every year a plentiful harvest.' These words appeared to me wild and incoherent and I did not believe them. 'So it is,' said Lian Shu. 'The blind have no perception of the beauty of elegant figures, nor the deaf of the sound of bells and drums. But is it only the bodily senses of which deafness and

9. 智 "Zhi" variously translated as knowledge and wisdom. Throughout, Zhuangzi uses this character is a variety of contexts with many different intentions. Daoism has strong reservations about conscious knowledge, knowledge of facts. In Zhuangzi this is because to say "X is y" is to disregard the transformations that have led to a thing being a certain way and to disregard how it might come to be other ways. It also disregards the relations X has to other things. These relations are what makes X the way it is now. As a way to think about this answer this question: Is the sky blue?

blindness can be predicated? There is also a similar defect in the intelligence; and of this your words supply an illustration in yourself. That man, with those attributes, though all things were one mass of confusion, and he heard in that condition the whole world crying out to him to be rectified, would not have to address himself laboriously to the task, as if it were his business to rectify the world. Nothing could hurt that man; the greatest floods, reaching to the sky, could not drown him, nor would he feel the fervour of the greatest heats melting metals and stones till they flowed, and scorching all the ground and hills. From the dust and chaff of himself, he could still mould and fashion Yaos and Shuns – how should he be willing to occupy himself with things?' A man of Song, who dealt in the ceremonial caps (of Yin), went with them to Yue, the people of which cut off their hair and tattooed their bodies, so that they had no use for them. Yao ruled the people of the kingdom, and maintained a perfect government within the four seas. Having gone to see the four (Perfect) Ones on the distant hill of Gu Ye, when (he returned to his capital) on the south of the Fen water, his throne appeared no more to his deep-sunk oblivious eyes.

Huizi told Zhuangzi, saying, 'The king of Wei sent me some seeds of a large calabash, which I sowed. The fruit, when fully grown, could contain five piculs (of anything). I used it to contain water, but it was so heavy that I could not lift it by myself. I cut it in two to make the parts into drinking vessels; but the dried shells were too wide and unstable and would not hold (the liquor); nothing but large useless things! Because of their uselessness I knocked them to pieces.' Zhuangzi replied, 'You were indeed stupid, my master, in the use of what was large. There was a man of Song who was skillful at making a salve which kept the hands from getting chapped; and (his family) for generations had made the bleaching of cocoon-silk their business. A stranger heard of it, and proposed to buy the art of the preparation for a hundred ounces of silver. The kindred all came together, and considered the proposal. "We have," said they, "been bleaching cocoon-silk for generations, and have only gained a little money. Now in one morning we can sell to this man our art for a hundred ounces – let him have it." The stranger accordingly got it and went away with it to give counsel to the king of Wu, who was then engaged in hostilities with Yue. The king gave him the command of his fleet, and in the winter he had an engagement with that of Yue, on which he inflicted a great defeat, and was invested with a portion of territory taken from Yue. The keeping the hands from getting chapped was the same in both cases; but in the one case it led to the investiture (of the possessor of the salve), and in the other it had only enabled its owners to continue their bleaching. The difference of result was owing to the different use made of the art. Now you, Sir, had calabashes large enough to hold five piculs; why did you not think of making large bottle-gourds of them, by means of which you could have floated over rivers and lakes, instead of giving yourself the sorrow of finding that they were useless for holding anything. Your mind, my master, would seem to have been closed against all intelligence!'

Huizi said to Zhuangzi, 'I have a large tree, which men call the Ailantus. Its trunk swells out to a large size, but is not fit for a carpenter to apply his line to it; its smaller branches are knotted and crooked, so that the disk and square cannot be used on them. Though planted on the wayside, a builder would not turn his head to look at it. Now your words, Sir, are great, but of no use – all unite in putting them away from them.' Zhuangzi replied, 'Have you never seen a wildcat or a weasel? There it lies, crouching and low, till the wanderer approaches; east and west it leaps about, avoiding neither what is high nor what is low, till it is caught in a trap, or dies in a net. Again, there is the Yak, so large that it is like a cloud hanging in the sky. It is large indeed, but it cannot catch mice. You, Sir, have a large tree and are troubled because it is of no use – why do you not plant it in a tract where there is nothing else, or in a wide and barren wild? There you might saunter idly by its side, or in the enjoyment of untroubled ease sleep beneath it. Neither bill nor axe would shorten its existence; there would be nothing to injure it. What is there in its uselessness to cause you distress?'[10]

10. The last paragraphs of Chapter 1 are full of instances of things that seem useless but are only useless because of the narrowness of people's notion of

3. Chapter 2, Zhuangzi

Title in Chinese Characters:

齊物論

Chapter Title Translations:

“The Adjustment of Controversies” (Legge)

“Equalizing Assessments of Things” (Ziporyn)

“The sorting which evens things out” (Graham)

> Again, as with the previous chapter, after you have read this chapter come up with your own title and briefly explain why this is an appropriate title for the chapter.

Chapter 2 of the *Zhuangzi* is philosophically rich. It is also fragmentary and, as A.C. Graham notes in his translation of Zhuangzi, often reads as though it is a collection of notes quickly jotted down. As the three chapter titles above indicate, much of this chapter is concerned with replacing the analyses, divisions and controversies between the other Chinese philosophical schools of the time with a single synthetic account. Controversies are **adjusted**. Assessments are **equalized**. Things are **evened out**. This account is grounded in a view of the universe that sees everything that exists as **both** unified and different. It is not that one perspective is correct and another incorrect each perspective, as a perspective, tells a truth from the point of view of that perspective. The Dao contains all the different perspectives. Consider, though, whether there can be a perspective that contains all perspective.

The first section presents the reader with a great wind or breath that “blows through” the “ten thousand hollows” and, depending on the shape of the hollow, produces a different sound.[11] This great wind or breath is the 氣transliterated as “*qi*.” You are all experientially familiar with *qi*. Inhale. Exhale. In other words, breathe. This is **your** *qi*, your breath. It is what centers you and what keeps you alive. The great breath is the breath of the universe that blows through each things as it respirates. It is vital energy and life force, that which gives life or energy to every animated thing. This vital energy manifests itself in different ways depending on the forms it energizes. In *Zhuangzi* it is the fundamental force/energy of the universe. It is not some sort of basic matter, substance, or stuff, because it is always changing and transforming as it blows through the world. In Chapter 2 of the Zhuangzi this is demonstrated by the great wind passing through the hollows in things, it is what fills spaces, but the form it takes is determined by the hollow that it fills.

A way to understand this is to think about how the shapes of different musical instruments determines the sound the breath takes when someone blows through them. A flute sounds different from a saxophone which sounds different from a trombone.

useless. (Think here about what notions of “usefulness” leads people to believe that philosophy is useless.) The useless and the usefulness of the useless is a core theme of Zhuangzi.

11. A hollow is a hole or empty space in something. So, a soda can or pop bottle has a hollow inside once you drink the contents. So, in the case of *qi* giving different sounds as it moves through different hollows, have you ever made a sound by blowing across the top of an empty pop bottle? This is your breathe, your *qi*, making the bottle “express itself” in the sound it makes. In a metaphoric sense each of us human beings is, from the *Zhuangzi* perspective, a hollow through which *qi* moves.

Then, in section 5, it states: *There is no thing that is not "that", and there is no thing that is not "this"*. In other words, all things are interdependent, and no thing is a specific sort of thing separate from its relation to other things. One thing cannot be as it is without its particular opposition to that which it is not. Part of what you are is not a rock. This relationship of non-identity is essential to what you are. Because of this everything is part of a vast network of relatedness to every other thing. The *Zhuangzi* is full of such differences that are part of a greater unity.

The chapter ends with one of the most beloved fables in *Zhuangzi*, that of Zhuang Zhou and the butterfly. This is a fable of about identity and transformation.

The Butterfly Dream, by Chinese painter Lu Zhi (c. 1550). Source: Wikimedia Commons, public domain.

Zhuangzi, Inner Chapters, C. 2

James Legge, trans.

1. Nan-Guo Zi-Qi was seated, leaning forward on his stool. He was looking up to heaven and breathed gently, seeming to be in a trance, and to have lost all consciousness of any companion. (His disciple), Yan Cheng Zi-You, who was in attendance and standing before him, said, 'What is this? Can the body be made to become thus like a withered tree, and the mind to become like slaked lime? His appearance as he leans forward on the stool to-day is such as I never saw him have before in the same position.' Zi-Qi said, 'Yan, you do well to ask such a question, I had just now lost myself; but how should you understand it? You may have heard the notes of Man, but have not heard those of Earth; you may have heard the notes of Earth, but have not heard those of Heaven.'

Zi-You said, 'I venture to ask from you a description of all these.' The reply was, 'When the breath (氣 "qi" or "ch'i) of the Great Mass (of nature) comes strongly, it is called Wind. Sometimes it does not come so; but when it does, then from a myriad apertures there issues its excited noise; have you not heard it in a prolonged gale? Take the projecting bluff of a mountain forest – in the great trees, a hundred spans round, the apertures and cavities are like the nostrils, or the mouth, or the ears; now square, now round like a cup or a mortar; here like a wet footprint, and there like a large puddle. (The sounds issuing from them are like) those of fretted water, of the arrowy whizz, of the stern command, of the inhaling of the breath, of the shout, of the gruff note, of the deep wail, of the sad and piping note. The first notes are slight, and those that follow deeper, but in harmony with them. Gentle winds produce a small response; violent winds a great one. When the fierce gusts have passed away, all the apertures are empty (and still) – have you not seen this in the bending and quivering of the branches and leaves?'

Zi-You said, 'The notes of Earth then are simply those which come from its myriad apertures; and the notes of Man may just be compared to those which (are brought from the tubes of) bamboo- allow me to ask about the notes of Heaven.' Zi-Qi replied, 'Blowing the myriad differences, making them stop [proceed] of themselves, sealing their self-selecting – who is it that stirs it all up?'

[1. 已 : Another version reads: "己". 王孝魚點校《莊子集釋》作「己」。

2. 'Blowing the myriad differences, making them stop [proceed] of themselves, sealing their self-selecting – who is it that stirs it all up?' : Another version reads: "'When (the wind) blows, (the sounds from) the myriad apertures are different, and (its cessation) makes them stop of themselves. Both of these things arise from (the wind and the apertures) themselves – should there be any other agency that excites them?'". (James Legge's original version)]

2. Great knowledge is wide and comprehensive; small knowledge is partial and restricted. Great speech is exact and complete; small speech is (merely) so much talk. When we sleep, the soul communicates with (what is external to us); when we awake, the body is set free. Our intercourse with others then leads to various activity, and daily there is the striving of mind with mind. There are hesitancies; deep difficulties; reservations; small apprehensions causing restless distress, and great apprehensions producing endless fears. Where their utterances are like arrows from a bow, we have those who feel it their charge to pronounce what is right and what is wrong; where they are given out like the conditions of a covenant, we have those who maintain their views, determined to overcome. (The weakness of their arguments), like the decay (of things) in autumn and winter, shows the failing (of the minds of some) from day to day; or it is like their water which, once voided, cannot be gathered up again. Then their ideas seem as if fast bound with cords, showing that the mind is become like an old and dry moat, and that it is nigh to death, and cannot be restored to vigour and brightness. Joy and anger, sadness and pleasure, anticipation and regret,

fickleness and fixedness, vehemence and indolence, eagerness and tardiness;– (all these moods), like music from an empty tube, or mushrooms from the warm moisture, day and night succeed to one another and come before us, and we do not know whence they sprout. Let us stop! Let us stop! Can we expect to find out suddenly how they are produced?

3. If there were not (the views of) another, I should not have mine; if there were not I (with my views), his would be uncalled for:– this is nearly a true statement of the case, but we do not know what it is that makes it be so. It might seem as if there would be a true Governor concerned in it, but we do not find any trace (of his presence and acting). That such an One could act so I believe; but we do not see His form. He has affections, but He has no form. Given the body, with its hundred parts, its nine openings, and its six viscera, all complete in their places, which do I love the most? Do you love them all equally? or do you love some more than others? Is it not the case that they all perform the part of your servants and waiting women? All of them being such, are they not incompetent to rule one another? or do they take it in turns to be now ruler and now servants? There must be a true Ruler (among them) whether by searching you can find out His character or not, there is neither advantage nor hurt, so far as the truth of His operation is concerned. When once we have received the bodily form complete, its parts do not fail to perform their functions till the end comes. In conflict with things or in harmony with them, they pursue their course to the end, with the speed of a galloping horse which cannot be stopped – is it not sad? To be constantly toiling all one's lifetime, without seeing the fruit of one's labour, and to be weary and worn out with his labour, without knowing where he is going to – is it not a deplorable case? Men may say, 'But it is not death;' yet of what advantage is this? When the body is decomposed, the mind will be the same along with it – must not the case be pronounced very deplorable? Is the life of man indeed enveloped in such darkness? Is it I alone to whom it appears so? And does it not appear to be so to other men?

4. If we were to follow the judgments of the predetermined mind, who would be left alone and without a teacher? Not only would it be so with those who know the sequences (of knowledge and feeling) and make their own selection among them, but it would be so as well with the stupid and unthinking. For one who has not this determined mind, to have his affirmations and negations is like the case described in the saying, 'He went to Yue to-day, and arrived at it yesterday.' It would be making what was not a fact to be a fact. But even the spirit-like Yu could not have known how to do this, and how should one like me be able to do it? But speech is not like the blowing (of the wind); the speaker has (a meaning in) his words. If, however, what he says, be indeterminate (as from a mind not made up), does he then really speak or not? He thinks that his words are different from the chirpings of fledgelings; but is there any distinction between them or not? But how can the Dao be so obscured, that there should be 'a True' and 'a False' in it? How can speech be so obscured that there should be 'the Right' and 'the Wrong' about them? Where shall the Dao go to that it will not be found? Where shall speech be found that it will be inappropriate? Dao becomes obscured through the small comprehension (of the mind), and speech comes to be obscure through the vain-gloriousness (of the speaker). So it is that we have the contentions between the Literati and the Mohists, the one side affirming what the other denies, and vice versa. If we would decide on their several affirmations and denials, no plan is like bringing the (proper) light (of the mind) to bear on them.

5. There is no thing that is not "that", and there is no thing that is not "this". If I look at something from "that", I do not see it; only if I look at it from knowing do I know it. Hence it is said, 'That view comes from this; and this view is a consequence of that:' – which is the theory that that view and this (the opposite views) produce each the other. Although it be so, there is affirmed now life and now death; now death and now life; now the admissibility of a thing and now its inadmissibility; now its inadmissibility and now its admissibility. (The disputants) now affirm and now deny; now deny and now affirm. Therefore, the sagely man does not pursue this method, but views things in the light of (his) Heaven (-ly nature), and hence forms his judgment of what is right. This view is the same as that, and that view is the same as this. But that view involves both

a right and a wrong; and this view involves also a right and a wrong – are there indeed the two views, that and this? Or are there not the two views, that and this? They have not found their point of correspondency which is called the pivot of the Dao. As soon as one finds this pivot, he stands in the centre of the ring (of thought), where he can respond without end to the changing views; without end to those affirming, and without end to those denying. Therefore I said, 'There is nothing like the proper light (of the mind).'

6. By means of a finger (of my own) to illustrate that the finger (of another) is not a finger is not so good a plan as to illustrate that it is not so by means of what is (acknowledged to be) not a finger; and by means of (what I call) a horse to illustrate that (what another calls) a horse is not so, is not so good a plan as to illustrate that it is not a horse, by means of what is (acknowledged to be) not a horse. (All things in) heaven and earth may be (dealt with as) a finger; (each of) their myriads may be (dealt with as) a horse.

Does a thing seem so to me? (I say that) it is so. Does it seem not so to me? (I say that) it is not so. A path is formed by (constant) treading on the ground. A thing is called by its name through the (constant) application of the name to it. How is it so? It is so because it is so. How is it not so? It is not so, because it is not so. Everything has its inherent character and its proper capability. There is nothing which has not these. Therefore, this being so, if we take a stalk of grain and a (large) pillar, a loathsome (leper) and (a beauty like) Xi Shi, things large and things insecure, things crafty and things strange; they may in the light of the Dao all be reduced to the same category (of opinion about them).

It was separation that led to completion; from completion ensued dissolution. But all things, without regard to their completion and dissolution, may again be comprehended in their unity – it is only the far reaching in thought who know how to comprehend them in this unity. This being so, let us give up our devotion to our own views, and occupy ourselves with the ordinary views. These ordinary views are grounded on the use of things. (The study of that) use leads to the comprehensive judgment, and that judgment secures the success (of the inquiry). That success gained, we are near (to the object of our search), and there we stop. When we stop, and yet we do not know how it is so, we have what is called the Dao. When we toil our spirits and intelligence, obstinately determined (to establish our own view), and do not know the agreement (which underlies it and the views of others), we have what is called 'In the morning three.' What is meant by that 'In the morning three?' A keeper of monkeys, in giving them out their acorns, (once) said, 'In the morning I will give you three (measures) and in the evening four.' This made them all angry, and he said, 'Very well. In the morning I will give you four and in the evening three.' The monkeys were all pleased. His two proposals were substantially the same, but the result of the one was to make the creatures angry, and of the other to make them pleased – an illustration of the point I am insisting on. Therefore, the sagely man brings together a dispute in its affirmations and denials, and rests in the equal fashioning of Heaven. Both sides of the question are admissible.

7. Among the men of old their knowledge reached the extreme point. What was that extreme point? Some held that at first there was not anything. This is the extreme point, the utmost point to which nothing can be added. A second class held that there was something, but without any responsive recognition of it (on the part of men). A third class held that there was such recognition, but there had not begun to be any expression of different opinions about it. It was through the definite expression of different opinions about it that there ensued injury to (the doctrine of) the Dao. It was this injury to the (doctrine of the) Dao which led to the formation of (partial) preferences. Was it indeed after such preferences were formed that the injury came? or did the injury precede the rise of such preferences? If the injury arose after their formation, Zhao's method of playing on the lute was natural. If the injury arose before their formation, there would have been no such playing on the lute as Zhao's. Zhao Wen's playing on the lute, Shi Kuang's indicating time with his staff, and Huizi's (giving his views), while leaning against a dryandra tree (were all extraordinary). The knowledge of the three men (in their several arts) was nearly perfect, and therefore they practised them to

the end of their lives. They loved them because they were different from those of others. They loved them and wished to make them known to others. But as they could not be made clear, though they tried to make them so, they ended with the obscure (discussions) about 'the hard' and 'the white.' And their sons, moreover, with all the threads of their fathers' compositions, yet to the end of their lives accomplished nothing. If they, proceeding in this way, could be said to have succeeded, then am I also successful; if they cannot be pronounced successful, neither I nor any other can succeed. Therefore the scintillations of light from the midst of confusion and perplexity are indeed valued by the sagely man; but not to use one's own views and to take his position on the ordinary views is what is called using the (proper) light.

8. But here now are some other sayings – I do not know whether they are of the same character as those which I have already given, or of a different character. Whether they be of the same character or not when looked at along with them, they have a character of their own, which cannot be distinguished from the others. But though this be the case, let me try to explain myself. There was a beginning. There was a beginning before that beginning. There was a beginning previous to that beginning before there was the beginning. There was existence; there had been no existence. There was no existence before the beginning of that no existence. There was no existence previous to the no existence before there was the beginning of the no existence. If suddenly there was nonexistence, we do not know whether it was really anything existing, or really not existing. Now I have said what I have said, but I do not know whether what I have said be really anything to the point or not.

9. Under heaven there is nothing greater than the tip of an autumn down, and the Tai mountain is small. There is no one more long-lived than a child which dies prematurely, and Peng Zu did not live out his time. Heaven, Earth, and I were produced together, and all things and I are one. Since they are one, can there be speech about them? But since they are spoken of as one, must there not be room for speech? One and Speech are two; two and one are three. Going on from this (in our enumeration), the most skilful reckoner cannot reach (the end of the necessary numbers), and how much less can ordinary people do so! Therefore from non-existence we proceed to existence till we arrive at three; proceeding from existence to existence, to how many should we reach? Let us abjure such procedure, and simply rest here.

10. The Dao at first met with no responsive recognition. Speech at first had no constant forms of expression. Because of this there came the demarcations (of different views). Let me describe those demarcations: they are the Left and the Right; the Relations and their Obligations; Classifications and their Distinctions; Emulations and Contentions. These are what are called 'the Eight Qualities.' Outside the limits of the world of men, the sage occupies his thoughts, but does not discuss about anything; inside those limits he occupies his thoughts, but does not pass any judgments. In the Chun Qiu, which embraces the history of the former kings, the sage indicates his judgments, but does not argue (in vindication of them). Thus it is that he separates his characters from one another without appearing to do so, and argues without the form of argument. How does he do so? The sage cherishes his views in his own breast, while men generally state theirs argumentatively, to show them to others. Hence we have the saying, 'Disputation is a proof of not seeing clearly.'

The Great Dao does not admit of being praised. The Great Argument does not require words. Great Benevolence is not (officiously) benevolent. Great Disinterestedness does not vaunt its humility. Great Courage is not seen in stubborn bravery. The Dao that is displayed is not the Dao. Words that are argumentative do not reach the point. Benevolence that is constantly exercised does not accomplish its object. Disinterestedness that vaunts its purity is not genuine. Courage that is most stubborn is ineffectual. These five seem to be round (and complete), but they tend to become square (and immovable). Therefore the knowledge that stops at what it does not know is the greatest. Who knows the argument that needs no words, and the Way that is not to be trodden? He who is able to know this has what is called 'The

Heavenly Treasure-house.' He may pour into it without its being filled; he may pour from it without its being exhausted; and all the while he does not know whence (the supply) comes. This is what is called 'The Store of Light.' Therefore of old Yao asked Shun, saying, 'I wish to smite (the rulers of) Zong, Kuai, and Xu-Ao. Even when standing in my court, I cannot get them out of my mind. How is it so?' Shun replied, 'Those three rulers live (in their little states) as if they were among the mugwort and other brushwood – how is it that you cannot get them out of your mind? Formerly, ten suns came out together, and all things were illuminated by them; how much should (your) virtue exceed (all) suns!'

11. Nie Que asked Wang Ni, saying, 'Do you know, Sir, what all creatures agree in approving and affirming?' 'How should I know it?' was the reply. 'Do you know what it is that you do not know?' asked the other again, and he got the same reply. He asked a third time, 'Then are all creatures thus without knowledge?' and Wang Ni answered as before, (adding however), 'Notwithstanding, I will try and explain my meaning. How do you know that when I say "I know it," I really (am showing that) I do not know it, and that when I say "I do not know it," I really am showing that I do know it.' And let me ask you some questions: 'If a man sleep in a damp place, he will have a pain in his loins, and half his body will be as if it were dead; but will it be so with an eel? If he be living in a tree, he will be frightened and all in a tremble; but will it be so with a monkey? And does any one of the three know his right place ? Men eat animals that have been fed on grain and grass; deer feed on the thick-set grass; centipedes enjoy small snakes; owls and crows delight in mice; but does any one of the four know the right taste? The dog-headed monkey finds its mate in the female gibbon; the elk and the axis deer cohabit; and the eel enjoys itself with other fishes. Mao Qiang and Li Ji were accounted by men to be most beautiful, but when fishes saw them, they dived deep in the water from them; when birds, they flew from them aloft; and when deer saw them, they separated and fled away. But did any of these four know which in the world is the right female attraction? As I look at the matter, the first principles of benevolence and righteousness and the paths of approval and disapproval are inextricably mixed and confused together – how is it possible that I should know how to discriminate among them?' Nie Que said (further), 'Since you, Sir, do not know what is advantageous and what is hurtful, is the Perfect man also in the same way without the knowledge of them?' Wang Ni replied, 'The Perfect man is spirit-like. Great lakes might be boiling about him, and he would not feel their heat; the He and the Han might be frozen up, and he would not feel the cold; the hurrying thunderbolts might split the mountains, and the wind shake the ocean, without being able to make him afraid. Being such, he mounts on the clouds of the air, rides on the sun and moon, and rambles at ease beyond the four seas. Neither death nor life makes any change in him, and how much less should the considerations of advantage and injury do so!'

12. Qu Quezi asked Chang Wuzi, saying, 'I heard the Master (speaking of such language as the following): "The sagely man does not occupy himself with worldly affairs. He does not put himself in the way of what is profitable, nor try to avoid what is hurtful; he has no pleasure in seeking (for anything from any one); he does not care to be found in (any established) Way; he speaks without speaking; he does not speak when he speaks; thus finding his enjoyment outside the dust and dirt (of the world)." The Master considered all this to be a shoreless flow of mere words, and I consider it to describe the course of the Mysterious Way – What do you, Sir, think of it?' Chang Wuzi replied, 'The hearing of such words would have perplexed even Huang Di, and how should Qiu be competent to understand them? And you, moreover, are too hasty in forming your estimate (of their meaning). You see the egg, and (immediately) look out for the cock (that is to be hatched from it); you see the bow, and (immediately) look out for the dove (that is to be brought down by it) being roasted. I will try to explain the thing to you in a rough way; do you in the same way listen to me. How could any one stand by the side of the sun and moon, and hold under his arm all space and all time? (Such language only means that the sagely man) keeps his mouth shut, and puts aside questions that are uncertain and dark; making his inferior capacities unite with him in honouring (the One Lord). Men in general bustle about and toil; the sagely man seems stupid and to know nothing. He blends ten thousand years together in the one (conception of time); the myriad things all pursue their spontaneous course, and

they are all before him as doing so. How do I know that the love of life is not a delusion? and that the dislike of death is not like a young person's losing his way, and not knowing that he is (really) going home? Li Ji was a daughter of the border Warden of Ai. When (the ruler of) the state of Jin first got possession of her, she wept till the tears wetted all the front of her dress. But when she came to the place of the king, shared with him his luxurious couch, and ate his grain-and-grass-fed meat, then she regretted that she had wept. How do I know that the dead do not repent of their former craving for life? Those who dream of (the pleasures of) drinking may in the morning wail and weep; those who dream of wailing and weeping may in the morning be going out to hunt. When they were dreaming they did not know it was a dream; in their dream they may even have tried to interpret it; but when they awoke they knew that it was a dream. And there is the great awaking, after which we shall know that this life was a great dream. All the while, the stupid think they are awake, and with nice discrimination insist on their knowledge; now playing the part of rulers, and now of grooms. Bigoted was that Qiu! He and you are both dreaming. I who say that you are dreaming am dreaming myself. These words seem very strange; but if after ten thousand ages we once meet with a great sage who knows how to explain them, it will be as if we met him (unexpectedly) some morning or evening.

Since you made me enter into this discussion with you, if you have got the better of me and not I of you, are you indeed right, and I indeed wrong? If I have got the better of you and not you of me, am I indeed right and you indeed wrong? Is the one of us right and the other wrong? are we both right or both wrong? Since we cannot come to a mutual and common understanding, men will certainly continue in darkness on the subject. Whom shall I employ to adjudicate in the matter? If I employ one who agrees with you, how can he, agreeing with you, do so correctly? If I employ one who agrees with me, how can he, agreeing with me, do so correctly? If I employ one who disagrees with you and I, how can he, disagreeing with you and I, do so correctly? If I employ one who agrees with you and I, how can he, agreeing with you and I, do so correctly? In this way I and you and those others would all not be able to come to a mutual understanding; and shall we then wait for that (great sage)? (We need not do so.) To wait on others to learn how conflicting opinions are changed is simply like not so waiting at all. The harmonising of them is to be found in the invisible operation of Heaven, and by following this on into the unlimited past. It is by this method that we can complete our years (without our minds being disturbed). What is meant by harmonising (conflicting opinions) in the invisible operation of Heaven? There is the affirmation and the denial of it; and there is the assertion of an opinion and the rejection of it. If the affirmation be according to the reality of the fact, it is certainly different from the denial of it – there can be no dispute about that. If the assertion of an opinion be correct, it is certainly different from its rejection – neither can there be any dispute about that. Let us forget the lapse of time; let us forget the conflict of opinions. Let us make our appeal to the Infinite, and take up our position there.'

13. The Penumbra asked the Shadow, saying, 'Formerly you were walking on, and now you have stopped; formerly you were sitting, and now you have risen up – how is it that you are so without stability?' The Shadow replied, 'I wait for the movements of something else to do what I do, and that something else on which I wait waits further on another to do as it does. My waiting, is it for the scales of a snake, or the wings of a cicada? How should I know why I do one thing, or do not do another?

14. Formerly, I, Zhuang Zhou, dreamt that I was a butterfly, a butterfly flying about, feeling that it was enjoying itself. I did not know that it was Zhou. Suddenly I awoke, and was myself again, the veritable Zhou. I did not know whether it had formerly been Zhou dreaming that he was a butterfly, or it was now a butterfly dreaming that it was Zhou. But between Zhou and a butterfly there must be a difference. This is a case of what is called the Transformation.

4. Chapter 3, *Zhuangzi*

Title in Chinese Characters:

養生主

Chapter Title Translations:

“The Primacy of Nourishing Life” (Ziporyn)

“Nourishing the Lord of Life” (Legge)

“What matters in the nurture of life” (Graham)

Although Chapter 3 of the *Zhuangzi* is short, it establishes some important Daoist principles.

The short first section of this chapter requires careful reading. In the Legge translation it says that our life is limited but knowledge is unlimited. It then goes on to say that it is perilous for what is limited to pursue the unlimited. This is part of a thread in the *Zhuangzi* that is opposed to the pursuit of knowledge for its own sake. The correct *Dao* is that of flowing within the limits of where you are and who you are.

Interestingly, doing this is said to give extraordinary powers. This is shown in the next section.

The next section introduces the reader to the cook of King Hui. This cook, whose art at butchering an ox astonishes the king states,

“What your servant loves is the method of the Dao, something in advance of any art.” (Legge)

“What I love is the Course, something that advances beyond mere skill.” (Ziporyn)

Following the “Dao” allows the cook to slice through the spaces that lie within the carcass of the ox. Legge translates these spaces as the “natural lines.” Ziporyn, in his translation, helpfully tells us that the characters translated here are, *tianli* (莫不). He translates this as “heaven’s unwrought perforations.” What is important here is the notion of “heaven,” which, as I noted earlier, also can be translated as “natural.” What the cook is seeing is the hidden natural order in things. This is what makes him different from other cooks. He works with the way the world is rather than by attempting to force his will on it. Our egos, desires, and limited knowledge lead us to see what we are looking for rather than what really is. This is also known a “projection.” By telling us to pause and allow things to be as they are the cook is providing a way (*dao*) to see the true nature of things.

This *dao* is seen in the fact that when the cook encounters difficulty he does not force his way. Rather he pauses and takes takes small, slow moments to great results. In this way the natural order of things (*Tian*) works its way and it is as if the ox butchers itself.

> Try to think of examples from your own life where, rather than forcing things, you like natural process take their course. Also, think of instances when forcing things have made your life harder. Especially, consider this in your relation to that which is not you, for example, forcing someone who is different than you to do things your way.

After this we meet a one-footed man from heaven, a pheasant, and are taught a lesson in how to mourn.

> As with chapters 1 & 2, after you have read this chapter come up with your own title and briefly explain why this is an appropriate title for the chapter.

Zhuangzi, Inner Chapters, C. 3

James Legge, trans.

1. There is a limit to our life, but to knowledge there is no limit. With what is limited to pursue after what is unlimited is a perilous thing; and when, knowing this, we still seek the increase of our knowledge, the peril cannot be averted. There should not be the practice of what is good with any thought of the fame (which it will bring), nor of what is evil with any approximation to the punishment (which it will incur): an accordance with the Central Element (of our nature) is the regular way to preserve the body, to maintain the life, to nourish our parents, and to complete our term of years.

2. His cook was cutting up an ox for the ruler Wen Hui. Whenever he applied his hand, leaned forward with his shoulder, planted his foot, and employed the pressure of his knee, in the audible ripping off of the skin, and slicing operation of the knife, the sounds were all in regular cadence. Movements and sounds proceeded as in the dance of 'the Mulberry Forest' and the blended notes of the King Shou.' The ruler said, 'Ah! Admirable! That your art should have become so perfect!' (Having finished his operation), the cook laid down his knife, and replied to the remark, 'What your servant loves is the method of the Dao, something in advance of any art. When I first began to cut up an ox, I saw nothing but the (entire) carcase. After three years I ceased to see it as a whole. Now I deal with it in a spirit-like manner, and do not look at it with my eyes. The use of my senses is discarded, and my spirit acts as it wills. Observing the natural lines, (my knife) slips through the great crevices and slides through the great cavities, taking advantage of the facilities thus presented. My art avoids the membranous ligatures, and much more the great bones. A good cook changes his knife every year; (it may have been injured) in cutting – an ordinary cook changes his every month – (it may have been) broken. Now my knife has been in use for nineteen years; it has cut up several thousand oxen, and yet its edge is as sharp as if it had newly come from the whetstone. There are the interstices of the joints, and the edge of the knife has no (appreciable) thickness; when that which is so thin enters where the interstice is, how easily it moves along! The blade has more than room enough. Nevertheless, whenever I come to a complicated joint, and see that there will be some difficulty, I proceed anxiously and with caution, not allowing my eyes to wander from the place, and moving my hand slowly. Then by a very slight movement of the knife, the part is quickly separated, and drops like (a clod of) earth to the ground. Then standing up with the knife in my hand, I look all round, and in a leisurely manner, with an air of satisfaction, wipe it clean, and put it in its sheath.' The ruler Wen Hui said, 'Excellent! I have heard the words of my cook, and learned from them the nourishment of (our) life.'

3. When Gong-wen Xian saw the Master of the Left, he was startled, and said, 'What sort of man is this? How is it he has but one foot? Is it from Heaven? or from Man?' Then he added, 'It must be from Heaven, and not from Man. Heaven's making of this man caused him to have but one foot. In the person of man, each foot has its marrow. By this I know that his peculiarity is from Heaven, and not from Man.

4. A pheasant of the marshes has to take ten steps to pick up a mouthful of food, and thirty steps to get a

drink, but it does not seek to be nourished in a coop. Though its spirit would (there) enjoy a royal abundance, it does not think (such confinement) good.'

5. When Lao Dan died, Qin Shi went to condole (with his son), but after crying out three times, he came out. The disciples said to him, 'Were you not a friend of the Master?' 'I was,' he replied, and they said, 'Is it proper then to offer your condolences merely as you have done?' He said, 'It is. At first I thought he was the man of men, and now I do not think so. When I entered a little ago and expressed my condolences, there were the old men wailing as if they had lost a son, and the young men wailing as if they had lost their mother. In his attracting and uniting them to himself in such a way there must have been that which made them involuntarily express their words (of condolence), and involuntarily wail, as they were doing. And this was a hiding from himself of his Heaven (-nature), and an excessive indulgence of his (human) feelings; a forgetting of what he had received (in being born); what the ancients called the punishment due to neglecting the Heaven (-nature). When the Master came, it was at the proper time; when he went away, it was the simple sequence (of his coming). Quiet acquiescence in what happens at its proper time, and quietly submitting (to its ceasing) afford no occasion for grief or for joy. The ancients described (death) as the loosening of the cord on which God suspended (the life).

6. What we can point to are the faggots that have been consumed; but the fire is transmitted (elsewhere), and we know not that it is over and ended.

[Chapter 4 is omitted]

5. Chapter 5, *Zhuangzi*

Title in Chinese Characters:

德充符

Chapter Title Translations:

"Markers of Full Virtuosity" (Ziporyn)

"The Seal of Virtue Complete" (Legge)

"The signs of the fullness of power" (Graham)

Chapter 5 is full of amputees and other individuals who we would consider "disabled" in a variety of ways. Amputation was common punishment for crimes in China and, as can be seen for the text, these amputees are often shunned and despised because they are former criminals. People born with physical differences that led them to diverge from physical norms, were also often despised because they were seen as someone "unnatural." However, in the Zhuangzi worldview, neither their criminality nor their amputations nor their physical deviations from the norm prevent them from following the *Dao* to *de*. One reason for this is that the Daoist notion of "natural" is much more expensive than what was typically held in ancient China. What we might call a "freak of nature" is just "nature." Also, consider this in terms in terms of social norms of appearance and conduct. These are as fluid as physical norms. Yet, often, we are prejudiced against people who do not appear as our current social norms say they should appear if they are to be "handsome" or "beautiful." We do the same when people deviate from behavioral norms.

Not only may such individuals not be "disabled" in their ability to find the way to virtuosity (the *Dao* to

de), but they may be enabled by their apparent disadvantages. This is because, unable to do things that supposedly "able persons" can do, such differently abled persons can confront the world in ways that do not take for granted what this who fit social and physical norms simply assume. This allows them to see the world fresh, to allow it to be as it is, rather than try to fit it into the categories most people are conditioned to assume.

> What are some ways such conditioning works of you? How might being differently abled lead you to appreciate the world in new ways? Does this chapter change how you view differently abled person?

The text refers repeatedly to Confucius, sometimes calling him "*Zhongni*" and sometimes "*Kong Qiu*." It also refers to "*Lao Dan*" who is *Laozi*, the reputed author of the *Daodeching*. Confucius plays a variety of roles in the *Zhuangi*. You have to determine from the context whether he is being criticized of whether he is being made into a mouth piece for the Dao.

When the *Zhuangzi* has Zhongni state, for example, *'There is nothing so level as the surface of a pool of still water. It may serve as an example of what I mean. All within its circuit is preserved (in peace), and there comes to it no agitation from without. The virtuous efficacy is the perfect cultivation of the harmony (of the nature). Though the realisation of this be not manifested in the person, things cannot separate themselves (from its influence).'* He is clearly articulating a Daoist and not a Confucian perspective.

> Yet again, after you have read this chapter come up with your own title and briefly explain why this is an appropriate title for the chapter.

Zhuangzi, The Inner Chapters, C. 5

James Legge, trans.

1. In Lu there was a Wang Tai who had lost both his feet; while his disciples who followed and went about with him were as numerous as those of Zhongni. Chang Ji asked Zhongni about him, saying, 'Though Wang Tai is a cripple, the disciples who follow him about divide Lu equally with you, Master. When he stands, he does not teach them; when he sits, he does not discourse to them. But they go to him empty, and come back full. Is there indeed such a thing as instruction without words? and while the body is imperfect, may the mind be complete? What sort of man is he?' Zhongni replied, 'This master is a sage. I have only been too late in going to him. I will make him my teacher; and how much more should those do so who are not equal to me! Why should only the state of Lu follow him? I will lead on all under heaven with me to do so.'

Chang Ji rejoined, 'He is a man who has lost his feet, and yet he is known as the venerable Wang – he must be very different from ordinary men. What is the peculiar way in which he employs his mind?' The reply was, 'Death and life are great considerations, but they could work no change in him. Though heaven and earth were to be overturned and fall, they would occasion him no loss. His judgment is fixed regarding that in which there is no element of falsehood; and, while other things change, he changes not.

The transformations of things are to him the developments prescribed for them, and he keeps fast hold of the author of them.'

Chang Ji said, 'What do you mean?' 'When we look at things,' said Zhongni, 'as they differ, we see them to be different, (as for instance) the liver and the gall, or Chu and Yue; when we look at them, as they agree, we see them all to be a unity. So it is with this (Wang Tai). He takes no knowledge of the things for which his ears and eyes are the appropriate organs, but his mind delights itself in the harmony of (all excellent) qualities. He looks at the unity which belongs to things, and does not perceive where they have suffered loss. He looks on the loss of his feet as only the loss of so much earth.'

Chang Ji said, 'He is entirely occupied with his (proper) self. By his knowledge he has discovered (the nature of) his mind, and to that he holds as what is unchangeable; but how is it that men make so much of him?' The reply was, 'Men do not look into running water as a mirror, but into still water – it is only the still water that can arrest them all, and keep them (in the contemplation of their real selves). Of things which are what they are by the influence of the earth, it is only the pine and cypress which are the best instances – in winter as in summer brightly green. Of those which were what they were by the influence of Heaven, the most correct examples were Yao and Shun; fortunate in (thus) maintaining their own life correct, and so as to correct the lives of others. As a verification of the (power of) the original endowment, when it has been preserved, take the result of fearlessness – how the heroic spirit of a single brave soldier has been thrown into an army of nine hosts. If a man only seeking for fame and able in this way to secure it can produce such an effect, how much more (may we look for a greater result) from one whose rule is over heaven and earth, and holds all things in his treasury, who simply has his lodging in the six members of his body, whom his ears and eyes serve but as conveying emblematic images of things, who comprehends all his knowledge in a unity, and whose mind never dies! If such a man were to choose a day on which he would ascend far on high, men would (seek to) follow him there. But how should he be willing to occupy himself with other men?'

2. Shen-tu Jia was (another) man who had lost his feet. Along with Zi-chan of Zheng he studied under the master Bo-hun Wu-ren. Zi-chan said to him (one day), 'If I go out first, do you remain behind; and if you go out first, I will remain behind.' Next day they were again sitting together on the same mat in the hall, when Zi-chan said (again), 'If I go out first, do you remain behind; and if you go out first, I will remain behind. Now I am about to go out; will you stay behind or not? Moreover, when you see one of official rank (like myself), you do not try to get out of his way – do you consider yourself equal to one of official rank?' Shen-tu Jia replied, 'In our Master's school is there indeed such recognition required of official rank? You are one, Sir, whose pleasure is in your official rank, and would therefore take precedence of other men. I have heard that when a mirror is bright, the dust does not rest on it; when dust rests on it the mirror is not bright. When one dwells long with a man of ability and virtue, he comes to be without error. There now is our teacher whom you have chosen to make you greater than you are; and when you still talk in this way, are you not in error?' Zi-chan rejoined, 'A (shattered) object as you are, you would still strive to make yourself out as good as Yao! If I may form an estimate of your virtue, might it not be sufficient to lead you to the examination of yourself?' The other said, 'Most criminals, in describing their offences, would make it out that they ought not to have lost (their feet) for them; few would describe them so as to make it appear that they should not have preserved their feet. They are only the virtuous who know that such a calamity was unavoidable, and therefore rest in it as what was appointed for them. When men stand before (an archer like) Yi with his bent bow, if they are in the middle of his field, that is the place where they should be hit; and if they be not hit, that also was appointed. There are many with their feet entire who laugh at me because I have lost my feet, which makes me feel vexed and angry. But when I go to our teacher, I throw off that feeling, and return (to a better mood) – he has washed, without my knowing it, the other from me by (his instructions in) what is good. I have attended him now for nineteen years, and have not known that I am without my feet.

Now, you, Sir, and I have for the object of our study the (virtue) which is internal, and not an adjunct of the body, and yet you are continually directing your attention to my external body – are you not wrong in this?' Zi-chan felt uneasy, altered his manner and looks, and said, 'You need not, Sir, say anything more about it.'

3. In Lu there was a cripple, called Shu-shan the Toeless, who came on his heels to see Zhongni. Zhongni said to him, 'By your want of circumspection in the past, Sir, you have incurred such a calamity; of what use is your coming to me now?' Toeless said, 'Through my ignorance of my proper business and taking too little care of my body, I came to lose my feet. But now I am come to you, still possessing what is more honourable than my feet, and which therefore I am anxious to preserve entire. There is nothing which Heaven does not cover, and nothing which Earth does not sustain; you, Master, were regarded by me as doing the part of Heaven and Earth – how could I know that you would receive me in such a way?' Confucius rejoined, 'I am but a poor creature. But why, my master, do you not come inside, where I will try to tell you what I have learned?' When Toeless had gone out, Confucius said, 'Be stimulated to effort, my disciples. This toeless cripple is still anxious to learn to make up for the evil of his former conduct;– how much more should those be so whose conduct has been unchallenged!' Mr. Toeless, however, told Lao Dan (of the interview), saying, 'Kong Qiu, I apprehend, has not yet attained to be a Perfect man. What has he to do with keeping a crowd of disciples around him? He is seeking to have the reputation of being an extraordinary and marvellous man, and does not know that the Perfect man considers this to be as handcuffs and fetters to him.' Lao Dan said, 'Why did you not simply lead him to see the unity of life and death, and that the admissible and inadmissible belong to one category, so freeing him from his fetters? Would this be possible?' Toeless said, 'It is the punishment inflicted on him by Heaven. How can he be freed from it?'

4. [omitted]

5. A person who had no lips, whose legs were bent so that he could only walk on his toes, and who was (otherwise) deformed, addressed his counsels to duke Ling of Wei, who was so pleased with him, that he looked on a perfectly formed man as having a lean and small neck in comparison with him. Another who had a large goitre like an earthenware jar addressed his counsels to duke Huan of Qi, who was so pleased with him that he looked on a perfectly formed man as having a neck lean and small in comparison with him. So it is that when one's virtue is extraordinary, (any deficiency in) his bodily form may be forgotten. When men do not forget what is (easily) forgotten, and forget what is not (easily) forgotten, we have a case of real oblivion. Therefore the sagely man has that in which his mind finds its enjoyment, and (looks on) wisdom as (but) the shoots from an old stump; agreements with others are to him but so much glue ; kindnesses are (but the arts of) intercourse; and great skill is (but as) merchants' wares. The sagely man lays no plans; of what use would wisdom be to him? He has no cutting and hacking to do; of what use would glue be to him? He has lost nothing; of what use would arts of intercourse be to him? He has no goods to dispose of; what need has he to play the merchant? (The want of) these four things are the nourishment of (his) Heavenly (nature); that nourishment is its Heavenly food. Since he receives this food from Heaven, what need has he for anything of man's (devising)? He has the bodily form of man, but not the passions and desires of (other) men. He has the form of man, and therefore he is a man. Being without the passions and desires of men, their approvings and disapprovings are not to be found in him. How insignificant and small is (the body) by which he belongs to humanity! How grand and great is he in the unique perfection of his Heavenly (nature)!

6. Huizi said to Zhuangzi, 'Can a man indeed be without desires and passions?' The reply was, 'He can.' 'But on what grounds do you call him a man, who is thus without passions and desires?' Zhuangzi said, 'The Dao gives him his personal appearance (and powers); Heaven gives him his bodily form; how should we not call him a man?' Huizi rejoined, 'Since you call him a man, how can he be without passions and desires?' The reply was, 'You are misunderstanding what I mean by passions and desires. What I mean when I say

that he is without these is, that this man does not by his likings and dislikings do any inward harm to his body – he always pursues his course without effort, and does not (try to) increase his (store of) life.' Huizi rejoined, 'If there were not that increasing of (the amount) of life, how would he get his body?' Zhuangzi said, 'The Dao gives him his personal appearance (and powers); Heaven gives him his bodily form; and he does not by his likings and dislikings do any internal harm to his body. But now you, Sir, deal with your spirit as if it were something external to you, and subject your vital powers to toil. You sing (your ditties), leaning against a tree; you go to sleep, grasping the stump of a rotten dryandra tree. Heaven selected for you the bodily form (of a man), and you babble about what is strong and what is white.'

6. Chapter 6, *Zhuangzi*

大宗師

Chapter Title Translations:

"The Great Source as Teacher" (Ziporyn)

"The Great and Most Honoured Master" (Legge)

"The teacher who is the ultimate ancestor" (Graham)

Chapter 6 of the Zhuangzi begins with brief return to the issue of knowledge. Then, after asserting that "true knowledge" is a product of the perspective of the "true man," it proceeds with an exposition of the "true men of old." (Ziporyn uses the phrase "genuine human being" rather than "true man.") The "genuine human being" or the "true men of old" are marked by, among other things, their indifference to many of the things that worry most human beings in their quotidian existence.[12]

What are some things that are important to you, that you worry about, that you think you know, that, are not actually important, that you need not or should not worry about (perhaps because you cannot change them), that you do not actually know? How would becoming indifferent to such things change your life? What would you gain and what would you lose?

After this the Zhuangzi discusses life, death, and the changing body. One of the themes of the Inner Chapters is the inevitability of the transformations of the body and the fact that among those transformations is death.

"He [the genuine human being] considers early death or old age, his beginning and his ending, all to be good, and in this other men imitate him; how much more will they do so in regard to That Itself on which all things depend, and from which every transformation arises!"

The "That Itself" here is Tian/Heaven or the true order of the constantly transforming universe.

How do you try to resist the inevitable changes that occur in your life? With regard to such changes when is resistance futile? How can you work in to accommodate or employ such changes as a creative ans expansive force in your life?

This then is followed by accounts of conversations regarding how to approach disease and the fact of death.

12. "Quotidian existence" refers to how people are (existence) in their everyday (quotidian) lives.

In all cases the theme is one of acceptance of what is rather than a useless protest against what one cannot change. Throughout this section there are repeated passages that commend not following the strict observance of ritual that is key to Confucianism. Confucianism is presented as an attempt to hold onto that which we cannot hold on to.

One of the themes philosophers return to again and again is "being unto death."[13] It is often claimed by non-philosophers as well as philosophers, that one of the unique things about human beings is our awareness that at some point I will die. For the most part you do not how you will die or when you will die but you will die. How do you face the prospect of your death? Do you ignore it? Do you not think about it? Does it cause you fear? Does it bring you joy?

Part of thinking about death is also thinking about the ways we try to deny death. Some religions teach personal spiritual immortality. But what would it be like to continue as a spirit without your body? (Try to imagine this!) For others there is a struggle to extend life and perhaps find physical immortality. To live forever! As a society we devote extraordinary amounts of money and effort to keeping people alive as long as possible.

Is all of this worth the cost and effort? Is there ever a time when it is appropriate to allow oneself to die? What if you were to find out you are going to die tomorrow? Are you content with this?

What is the *Zhuangzi* perspective on these things?

> After you have read this chapter come up with your own title and briefly explain why this is an appropriate title for the chapter.

Zhuangzi, The Inner Chapters, C. 6

James Legge, trans.

1. He who knows the part which the Heavenly (in him) plays, and knows (also) that which the Human (in him ought to) play, has reached the perfection (of knowledge). He who knows the part which the Heavenly plays (knows) that it is naturally born with him; he who knows the part which the Human ought to play (proceeds) with the knowledge which he possesses to nourish it in the direction of what he does not (yet) know: to complete one's natural term of years and not come to an untimely end in the middle of his course is the fulness of knowledge. Although it be so, there is an evil (attending this condition). Such knowledge still awaits the confirmation of it as correct; it does so because it is not yet determined. How do we know that what we call the Heavenly (in us) is not the Human? and that what we call the Human is not the Heavenly? There must be the True man, and then there is the True knowledge.

What is meant by 'the True Man?' The True men of old did not reject (the views of) the few; they did not seek to accomplish (their ends) like heroes (before others); they did not lay plans to attain those ends. Being such, though they might make mistakes, they had no occasion for repentance; though they might succeed, they had no self-complacency. Being such, they could ascend the loftiest heights without fear; they could

13. A phrase taken from the German philosopher Martin Heidegger.

pass through water without being made wet by it; they could go into fire without being burnt; so it was that by their knowledge they ascended to and reached the Dao.

The True men of old did not dream when they slept, had no anxiety when they awoke, and did not care that their food should be pleasant. Their breathing came deep and silently. The breathing of the true man comes (even) from his heels, while men generally breathe (only) from their throats. When men are defeated in argument, their words come from their gullets as if they were vomiting. Where lusts and desires are deep, the springs of the Heavenly are shallow.

The True men of old knew nothing of the love of life or of the hatred of death. Entrance into life occasioned them no joy; the exit from it awakened no resistance. Composedly they went and came. They did not forget what their beginning bad been, and they did not inquire into what their end would be. They accepted (their life) and rejoiced in it; they forgot (all fear of death), and returned (to their state before life). Thus there was in them what is called the want of any mind to resist the Dao, and of all attempts by means of the Human to assist the Heavenly. Such were they who are called the True men. Being such, their minds were free from all thought; their demeanour was still and unmoved; their foreheads beamed simplicity. Whatever coldness came from them was like that of autumn; whatever warmth came from them was like that of spring. Their joy and anger assimilated to what we see in the four seasons. They did in regard to all things what was suitable, and no one could know how far their action would go. Therefore the sagely man might, in his conduct of war, destroy a state without losing the hearts of the people; his benefits and favours might extend to a myriad generations without his being a lover of men. Hence he who tries to share his joys with others is not a sagely man; he who manifests affection is not benevolent; he who observes times and seasons (to regulate his conduct) is not a man of wisdom; he to whom profit and injury are not the same is not a superior man; he who acts for the sake of the name of doing so, and loses his (proper) self is not the (right) scholar; and he who throws away his person in a way which is not the true (way) cannot command the service of others. Such men as Hu Bu-jie, Wu Guang, Bo-yi, Shu-Qi, the count of Ji, Xu-yu, Ji Ta, and Shen-tu Di, all did service for other men, and sought to secure for them what they desired, not seeking their own pleasure.

The True men of old presented the aspect of judging others aright, but without being partisans; of feeling their own insufficiency, but being without flattery or cringing. Their peculiarities were natural to them, but they were not obstinately attached to them; their humility was evident, but there was nothing of unreality or display about it. Their placidity and satisfaction had the appearance of joy; their every movement seemed to be a necessity to them. Their accumulated attractiveness drew men's looks to them; their blandness fixed men's attachment to their virtue. They seemed to accommodate themselves to the (manners of their age), but with a certain severity; their haughty indifference was beyond its control. Unceasing seemed their endeavours to keep (their mouths) shut; when they looked down, they had forgotten what they wished to say. They considered punishments to be the substance (of government, and they never incurred it); ceremonies to be its supporting wings (and they always observed them); wisdom (to indicate) the time (for action, and they always selected it); and virtue to be accordance (with others), and they were all-accordant. Considering punishments to be the substance (of government), yet their generosity appeared in the (manner of their) infliction of death. Considering ceremonies to be its supporting wings, they pursued by means of them their course in the world. Considering wisdom to indicate the time (for action), they felt it necessary to employ it in (the direction of) affairs. Considering virtue to be accordance (with others), they sought to ascend its height along with all who had feet (to climb it). (Such were they), and yet men really thought that they did what they did by earnest effort. In this way they were one and the same in all their likings and dislikings. Where they liked, they were the same; where they did not like, they were the same. In the former case where they liked, they were fellow-workers with the Heavenly (in them); in the latter where they disliked, they were co-workers with the Human in them. The

one of these elements (in their nature) did not overcome the other. Such were those who are called the True men.

2. Death and life are ordained, just as we have the constant succession of night and day – in both cases from Heaven. Men have no power to do anything in reference to them – such is the constitution of things. There are those who specially regard Heaven as their father, and they still love It (distant as It is); how much more should they love That which stands out (Superior and Alone)! Some specially regard their ruler as superior to themselves, and will give their bodies to die for him; how much more should they do so for That which is their true (Ruler)! When the springs are dried up, the fishes collect together on the land. Than that they should moisten one another there by the damp about them, and keep one another wet by their slime, it would be better for them to forget one another in the rivers and lakes. And when men praise Yao and condemn Jie, it would be better to forget them both, and seek the renovation of the Dao.

There is the great Mass (of nature) – I find the support of my body on it; my life is spent in toil on it; my old age seeks ease on it; at death I find rest in it – what makes my life a good makes my death also a good. If you hide away a boat in the ravine of a hill, and hide away the hill in a lake, you will say that (the boat) is secure; but at midnight there shall come a strong man and carry it off on his back, while you in the dark know nothing about it. You may hide away anything, whether small or great, in the most suitable place, and yet it shall disappear from it. But if you could hide the world in the world, so that there was nowhere to which it could be removed, this would be the grand reality of the ever-during Thing. When the body of man comes from its special mould, there is even then occasion for joy; but this body undergoes a myriad transformations, and does not immediately reach its perfection; does it not thus afford occasion for joys incalculable? Therefore the sagely man enjoys himself in that from which there is no possibility of separation, and by which all things are preserved. He considers early death or old age, his beginning and his ending, all to be good, and in this other men imitate him; how much more will they do so in regard to That Itself on which all things depend, and from which every transformation arises!

3. This is the Dao; there is in It emotion and sincerity, but It does nothing and has no bodily form. It may be handed down (by the teacher), but may not be received (by his scholars). It may be apprehended (by the mind), but It cannot be seen. It has Its root and ground (of existence) in Itself. Before there were heaven and earth, from of old, there It was, securely existing. From It came the mysterious existences of spirits, from It the mysterious existence of God. It produced heaven; It produced earth. It was before the Tai-ji, and yet could not be considered high; It was below all space, and yet could not be considered deep. It was produced before heaven and earth, and yet could not be considered to have existed long; It was older than the highest antiquity, and yet could not be considered old. Shi-wei got It, and by It adjusted heaven and earth. Fu-xi got It, and by It penetrated to the mystery of the maternity of the primary matter. The Wei-dou got It, and from all antiquity has made no eccentric movement. The Sun and Moon got It, and from all antiquity have not intermitted (their bright shining). Kan-pei got It, and by It became lord of Kun-lun. Feng-yi got It, and by It enjoyed himself in the Great River. Jian-wu got It, and by It dwelt on mount Tai. Huang-di got It, and by It ascended the cloudy sky. Zhuan-xu got It, and by It dwelt in the Dark Palace. Yu-jiang got It, and by It was set on the North Pole. Xi Wang-mu got It, and by It had her seat in (the palace of) Shao-guang. No one knows Its beginning; no one knows Its end. Peng Zu got It, and lived on from the time of the lord of Yu to that of the Five Chiefs. Fu Yue got It, and by It became chief minister to Wu-ding, (who thus) in a trice became master of the kingdom. (After his death), Fu Yue mounted to the eastern portion of the Milky Way, where, riding on Sagittarius and Scorpio, he took his place among the stars.

4. Nan-bo Zi-kui asked Nu Yu, saying, 'You are old, Sir, while your complexion is like that of a child; how is it so?' The reply was, 'I have become acquainted with the Dao.' The other said, 'Can I learn the Dao?' Nu Yu said, 'No. How can you? You, Sir, are not the man to do so. There was Bu-liang Yi who had the

abilities of a sagely man, but not the Dao, while I had the Dao, but not the abilities. I wished, however, to teach him, if, peradventure, he might become the sagely man indeed. If he should not do so, it was easy (I thought) for one possessing the Dao of the sagely man to communicate it to another possessing his abilities. Accordingly, I proceeded to do so, but with deliberation. After three days, he was able to banish from his mind all worldly (matters). This accomplished, I continued my intercourse with him in the same way; and in seven days he was able to banish from his mind all thought of men and things. This accomplished, and my instructions continued, after nine days, he was able to count his life as foreign to himself. This accomplished, his mind was afterwards clear as the morning; and after this he was able to see his own individuality. That individuality perceived, he was able to banish all thought of Past or Present. Freed from this, he was able to penetrate to (the truth that there is no difference between) life and death – (how) the destruction of life is not dying, and the communication of other life is not living. (The Dao) is a thing which accompanies all other things and meets them, which is present when they are overthrown and when they obtain their completion. Its name is Tranquillity amid all Disturbances, meaning that such Disturbances lead to Its Perfection.'

'And how did you, being alone (without any teacher), learn all this?' 'I learned it,' was the reply, 'from the son of Fu-mo; he learned it from the grandson of Luo-song; he learned it from Zhan-ming; he learned it from Nie-xu; he, from Xu-yu; he, from Ou; he, from Xuan-ming; he, from Shen-liao; and he learned it from Yi-shi.

Zhongni said, 'Once when I was sent on a mission to Qi, I saw some pigs sucking at their dead mother. After a little they looked with rapid glances, when they all left her, and ran away. They felt that she did not see them, and that she was no longer like themselves. What they had loved in their mother was not her bodily figure, but what had given animation to her figure. When a man dies in battle, they do not at his interment employ the usual appendages of plumes: as to supplying shoes to one who has lost his feet, there is no reason why he should care for them – in neither case is there the proper reason for their use. The members of the royal harem do not pare their nails nor pierce their ears; when a man is newly married, he remains (for a time) absent from his official duties, and unoccupied with them. That their bodies might be perfect was sufficient to make them thus dealt with; how much greater results should be expected from men whose mental gifts are perfect! This Ai-tai Tuo was believed by men, though he did not speak a word; and was loved by them, though he did no special service for them. He made men appoint him to the government of their states, afraid only that he would not accept the appointment. He must have been a man whose powers were perfect, though his realisation of them was not manifested in his person.

5. Zi-si, Zi-yu, Zi-li, and Zi-lai, these four men, were talking together, when someone said, 'Who can suppose the head to be made from nothing, the spine from life, and the rump-bone from death? Who knows how death and birth, living on and disappearing, compose the one body? I would be friends with him.' The four men looked at one another and laughed, but no one seized with his mind the drift of the questions. All, however, were friends together. Not long after Zi-yu fell ill, and Zi-si went to inquire for him. 'How great,' said (the sufferer), 'is the Creator! That He should have made me the deformed object that I am!' He was a crooked hunchback; his five viscera were squeezed into the upper part of his body; his chin bent over his navel; his shoulder was higher than his crown; on his crown was an ulcer pointing to the sky; his breath came and went in gasps: yet he was easy in his mind, and made no trouble of his condition. He limped to a well, looked at himself in it, and said, 'Alas that the Creator should have made me the deformed object that I am!' Si said, 'Do you dislike your condition?' He replied, 'No, why should I dislike it? If He were to transform my left arm into a cock, I should be watching with it the time of the night; if He were to transform my right arm into a cross-bow, I should then be looking for a Xiao to (bring down and) roast; if He were to transform my rump-bone into a wheel, and my spirit into a horse, I should then be mounting it, and would not change it for another steed. Moreover, when we have got (what we are to do), there is the time (of life) in which to do it; when we lose that (at death), submission (is what is required). When we rest in what the time

requires, and manifest that submission, neither joy nor sorrow can find entrance (to the mind). This would be what the ancients called loosing the cord by which (the life) is suspended. But one hung up cannot loose himself;– he is held fast by his bonds. And that creatures cannot overcome Heaven (the inevitable) is a long-acknowledged fact – why should I hate my condition?'

Before long Zi-lai fell ill, and lay gasping at the point of death, while his wife and children stood around him wailing. Zi-li went to ask for him, and said to them, 'Hush! Get out of the way! Do not disturb him as he is passing through his change.' Then, leaning against the door, he said (to the dying man), 'Great indeed is the Creator! What will He now make you to become? Where will He take you to? Will He make you the liver of a rat, or the arm of an insect? Zi-lai replied, 'Wherever a parent tells a son to go, east, west, south, or north, he simply follows the command. The Yin and Yang are more to a man than his parents are. If they are hastening my death, and I do not quietly submit to them, I shall be obstinate and rebellious. There is the great Mass (of nature);– I find the support of my body in it; my life is spent in toil on it; my old age seeks ease on it; at death I find rest on it: what has made my life a good will make my death also a good. Here now is a great founder, casting his metal. If the metal were to leap up (in the pot), and say, "I must be made into a (sword like the) Mo-ye," the great founder would be sure to regard it as uncanny. So, again, when a form is being fashioned in the mould of the womb, if it were to say, "I must become a man; I must become a man," the Creator would be sure to regard it as uncanny. When we once understand that heaven and earth are a great melting-pot, and the Creator a great founder, where can we have to go to that shall not be right for us? We are born as from a quiet sleep, and we die to a calm awaking.'

6. Zi-sang Hu, Meng Zi-fan, and Zi-qin Zhang, these three men, were friends together. (One of them said), 'Who can associate together without any (thought of) such association, or act together without any (evidence of) such co-operation? Who can mount up into the sky and enjoy himself amidst the mists, disporting beyond the utmost limits (of things), and forgetting all others as if this were living, and would have no end?' The three men looked at one another and laughed, not perceiving the drift of the questions; and they continued to associate together as friends. Suddenly, after a time, Zi-sang Hu died. Before he was buried, Confucius heard of the event, and sent Zi-gong to go and see if he could render any assistance. One of the survivors had composed a ditty, and the other was playing on his lute. Then they sang together in unison,

'Ah! come, Sang Hu! ah! come, Sang Hu!

Your being true you've got again,

While we, as men, still here remain

Ohone!'

Zi-gong hastened forward to them, and said, 'I venture to ask whether it be according to the rules to be singing thus in the presence of the corpse?' The two men looked at each other, and laughed, saying, 'What does this man know about the idea that underlies (our) rules?' Zi-gong returned to Confucius, and reported to him, saying, 'What sort of men are those? They had made none of the usual preparations, and treated the body as a thing foreign to them. They were singing in the presence of the corpse, and there was no change in their countenances. I cannot describe them; what sort of men are they?' Confucius replied, 'Those men occupy and enjoy themselves in what is outside the (common) ways (of the world), while I occupy and enjoy myself in what lies within those ways. There is no common ground for those of such different ways; and when I sent you to condole with those men, I was acting stupidly. They, moreover, make man to be the fellow of the Creator, and seek their enjoyment in the formless condition of heaven and earth. They consider life to be an appendage attached, an excrescence annexed to them, and death to be a separation of the

appendage and a dispersion of the contents of the excrescence. With these views, how should they know wherein death and life are to be found, or what is first and what is last? They borrow different substances, and pretend that the common form of the body is composed of them. They dismiss the thought of (its inward constituents like) the liver and gall, and (its outward constituents), the ears and eyes. Again and again they end and they begin, having no knowledge of first principles. They occupy themselves ignorantly and vaguely with what (they say) lies outside the dust and dirt (of the world), and seek their enjoyment in the business of doing nothing. How should they confusedly address themselves to the ceremonies practised by the common people, and exhibit themselves as doing so to the ears and eyes of the multitude?'

Zi-gong said, 'Yes, but why do you, Master, act according to the (common) ways (of the world)?' The reply was, 'I am in this under the condemning sentence of Heaven. Nevertheless, I will share with you (what I have attained to).' Zi-gong rejoined, 'I venture to ask the method which you pursue;' and Confucius said, 'Fishes breed and grow in the water; man developes in the Dao. Growing in the water, the fishes cleave the pools, and their nourishment is supplied to them. Developing in the Dao, men do nothing, and the enjoyment of their life is secured. Hence it is said, "Fishes forget one another in the rivers and lakes; men forget one another in the arts of the Dao."'

Zi-gong said, 'I venture to ask about the man who stands aloof from others.' The reply was, 'He stands aloof from other men, but he is in accord with Heaven! Hence it is said, "The small man of Heaven is the superior man among men; the superior man among men is the small man of Heaven!"'

7. Yan Hui asked Zhongni, saying, 'When the mother of Meng-sun Cai died, in all his wailing for her he did not shed a tear; in the core of his heart he felt no distress; during all the mourning rites, he exhibited no sorrow. Without these three things, he (was considered to have) discharged his mourning well; is it that in the state of Lu one who has not the reality may yet get the reputation of having it? I think the matter very strange.' Zhongni said, 'That Meng-sun carried out (his views) to the utmost. He was advanced in knowledge; but (in this case) it was not possible for him to appear to be negligent (in his ceremonial observances)', but he succeeded in being really so to himself. Meng-sun does not know either what purposes life serves, or what death serves; he does not know which should be first sought, and which last. If he is to be transformed into something else, he will simply await the transformation which he does not yet know. This is all he does. And moreover, when one is about to undergo his change, how does he know that it has not taken place? And when he is not about to undergo his change, how does he know that it has taken place? Take the case of me and you: are we in a dream from which we have not begun to awake? Moreover, Meng-sun presented in his body the appearance of being agitated, but in his mind he was conscious of no loss. The death was to him like the issuing from one's dwelling at dawn, and no (more terrible) reality. He was more awake than others were. When they wailed, he also wailed, having in himself the reason why he did so. And we all have our individuality which makes us what we are as compared together; but how do we know that we determine in any case correctly that individuality? Moreover you dream that you are a bird, and seem to be soaring to the sky; or that you are a fish, and seem to be diving in the deep. But you do not know whether we that are now speaking are awake or in a dream. It is not the meeting with what is pleasurable that produces the smile; it is not the smile suddenly produced that produces the arrangement (of the person). When one rests in what has been arranged, and puts away all thought of the transformation, he is in unity with the mysterious Heaven.'

8. Yi-er Zi having gone to see Xu You, the latter said to him, 'What benefit have you received from Yao?' The reply was, 'Yao says to me, You must yourself labour at benevolence and righteousness, and be able to tell clearly which is right and which wrong (in conflicting statements).' Xu You rejoined, 'Why then have you come to me? Since Yao has put on you the brand of his benevolence and righteousness, and cut off your nose with his right and wrong, how will you be able to wander in the way of aimless enjoyment, of

unregulated contemplation, and the ever-changing forms (of dispute)?' Yi-er Zi said, 'That may be; but I should like to skirt along its hedges.' 'But,' said the other, 'it cannot be. Eyes without pupils can see nothing of the beauty of the eyebrows, eyes, and other features; the blind have nothing to do with the green, yellow, and variegated colours of the sacrificial robes.' Yi-er Zi rejoined, 'Yet, when Wu-zhuang lost his beauty, Ju-liang his strength, and Huang-Di his wisdom, they all (recovered them) under the moulding (of your system) – how do you know that the Maker will not obliterate the marks of my branding, and supply my dismemberment, so that, again perfect in my form, I may follow you as my teacher?' Xu You said, 'Ah! that cannot yet be known. I will tell you the rudiments. 0 my Master! 0 my Master! He gives to all things their blended qualities, and does not count it any righteousness; His favours reach to all generations, and He does not count it any benevolence; He is more ancient than the highest antiquity, and does not count Himself old; He overspreads heaven and supports the earth; He carves and fashions all bodily forms, and does not consider it any act of skill;– this is He in whom I find my enjoyment.'

9. Yan Hui said, 'I am making progress.' Zhongni replied, 'What do you mean?' 'I have ceased to think of benevolence and righteousness,' was the reply. 'Very well; but that is not enough.' Another day, Hui again saw Zhongni, and said, 'I am making progress.' 'What do you mean?' 'I have lost all thought of ceremonies and music.' 'Very well, but that is not enough.' A third day, Hui again saw (the Master), and said, 'I am making progress.' 'What do you mean?' 'I sit and forget everything.' Zhongni changed countenance, and said, 'What do you mean by saying that you sit and forget (everything)?' Yan Hui replied, 'My connexion with the body and its parts is dissolved; my perceptive organs are discarded. Thus, leaving my material form, and bidding farewell to my knowledge, I am become one with the Great Pervader. This I call sitting and forgetting all things.' Zhongni said, 'One (with that Pervader), you are free from all likings; so transformed, you are become impermanent. You have, indeed, become superior to me! I must ask leave to follow in your steps.'

10. Zi-yu and Zi-sang were friends. (Once), when it had rained continuously for ten days, Zi-yu said, 'I fear that Zi-sang may be in distress.' So, he wrapped up some rice, and went to give it to him to eat. When he came to Zi-sang's door, there issued from it sounds between singing and wailing; a lute was struck, and there came the words, '0 Father! 0 Mother! 0 Heaven! 0 Men!' The voice could not sustain itself, and the line was hurriedly pronounced. Zi-yu entered and said, 'Why are you singing, Sir, this line of poetry in such a way?' The other replied, 'I was thinking, and thinking in vain, how it was that I was brought to such extremity. Would my parents have wished me to be so poor? Heaven overspreads all without any partial feeling, and so does Earth sustain all; Would Heaven and Earth make me so poor with any unkindly feeling? I was trying to find out who had done it, and I could not do so. But here I am in this extremity – it is what was appointed for me!'

7. Chapter 7, Zhuangzi

應帝王

Chapter Title Translations:

"Sovereign Responses for Ruling Powers" (Ziporyn)

"The Normal Course for Rulers and Kings" (Legge)

"Responding to the Emperors and Kings" (Graham)

Chapter 7 of the Zhuangzi can be read as tying together much of what is in the preceding chapters. It starts with a reflection on the relation between. knowledge, “zhi”, benevolence, “ren”, and virtue or virtuosity, “ren”, by contrasting those who follow Confucian “ren” with those who “sleep contentedly.” The next section contrasts “hypocrisy of virtue” of the “shame virtuosity” those who lead by example with those do not rule anything other than themselves. Ziporyn translates this, “To rule the world is like trying to carve a river out of an ocean….”

This is the notion of becoming “like a clod of earth.” In Daoism this is the notion of wu wei, 無爲. Ziporyn translates this as “not being, not doing.” Legge, in Section 6 below, as“non-action. Graham translates it as “doing nothing.”

“ … the perfect man [Ziporyn: consummate person”] employs his mind, it is a mirror. It conducts nothing and anticipates nothing; it responds to (what is before it), but does not retain it. Thus, he is able to deal successfully with all things, and injures none.”

What does it mean to make the mind like a mirror? (Suggestion, think about the difference between a mirror and an eye.)

Can you live a life of wu wei? How would such a life be different from your current life? What would you gain? What would you lose? What of what you would lose is, from the *Zhuangzi* perspective, is a genuine loss?

In thinking about both of these questions, use what you have learned from the whole of the Zuangzi as you have read it and come to understand it.

> After you have read this chapter come up with your own title and briefly explain why this is an appropriate title for the chapter.

Zhuangzi, The Inner Chapters, C. 7

James Legge, trans.

1. Nie Que put four questions to Wang Ni, not one of which did he know (how to answer). On this Nie Que leaped up, and in great delight walked away and informed Yu-yi Zi of it, who said to him, ‘Do you (only) now know [“zhi”] it?’ He of the line of Yu was not equal to him of the line of Tai. He of Yu still kept in himself (the idea of) benevolence [“ren”] by which to constrain (the submission of) men; and he did win men, but he had not begun to proceed by what did not belong to him as a man. He of the line of Tai would sleep tranquilly, and awake in contented simplicity. He would consider himself now (merely) as a horse, and now (merely) as an ox. His knowledge [“zhi”] was real and untroubled by doubts; and his virtue [“de”] was very true: he had not begun to proceed by what belonged to him as a man.

2. Jian Wu went to see the mad (recluse), Jie-yu, who said to him, ‘What did Ri-Zhong Shi tell you?’ The reply was, ‘He told me that when rulers gave forth their regulations according to their own views and enacted righteous measures, no one would venture not to obey them, and all would be transformed.’ Jie-yu said, ‘That is but the hypocrisy of virtue. For the right ordering of the world it would be like trying to wade through the sea and dig through the ocean, or employing a mosquito to carry a mountain on its back. And when a sage is governing, does he govern men’s outward actions? He is (himself) correct, and so (his government)

goes on; this is the simple and certain way by which he secures the success of his affairs. Think of the bird which flies high, to avoid being hurt by the dart on the string of the archer, and the little mouse which makes its hole deep under Shen-qiu to avoid the danger of being smoked or dug out; are (rulers) less knowing than these two little creatures?'

3. Tian Gen, rambling on the south of (mount) Yin, came to the neighbourhood of the Liao-water. Happening there to meet with the man whose name is not known, he put a question to him, saying, 'I beg to ask what should be done in order to (carry on) the government of the world.' The nameless man said, 'Go away; you are a rude borderer. Why do you put to me a question for which you are unprepared? I would simply play the part of the Maker of (all) things. When wearied, I would mount on the bird of the light and empty air, proceed beyond the six cardinal points, and wander in the region of nonentity, to dwell in the wilderness of desert space. What method have you, moreover, for the government of the world that you (thus) agitate my mind?' (Tian Gen), however, again asked the question, and the nameless man said, 'Let your mind find its enjoyment in pure simplicity; blend yourself with (the primary) ether in idle indifference; allow all things to take their natural course; and admit no personal or selfish consideration – do this and the world will be governed.'

4. Yang Zi-ju, having an interview with Lao Dan, said to him, 'Here is a man, alert and vigorous in responding to all matters, clearsighted and widely intelligent, and an unwearied student of the Dao – can he be compared to one of the intelligent kings?' The reply was, 'Such a man is to one of the intelligent kings but as the bustling underling of a court who toils his body and distresses his mind with his various contrivances. And moreover, it is the beauty of the skins of the tiger and leopard which makes men hunt them; the agility of the monkey, or (the sagacity of) the dog that catches the yak, which make men lead them in strings; but can one similarly endowed be compared to the intelligent kings?' Yang Zi-ju looked discomposed and said, 'I venture to ask you what the government of the intelligent kings is.' Lao Dan replied, 'In the governing of the intelligent kings, their services overspread all under the sky, but they did not seem to consider it as proceeding from themselves; their transforming influence reached to all things, but the people did not refer it to them with hope. No one could tell the name of their agency, but they made men and things be joyful in themselves. Where they took their stand could not be fathomed, and they found their enjoyment in (the realm of) nonentity.'

5. In Zheng there was a mysterious wizard called Ji-xian. He knew all about the deaths and births of men, their preservation and ruin, their misery and happiness, and whether their lives would be long or short, foretelling the year, the month, the decade and the day like a spirit. When the people of Kang saw him, they all ran out of his way. Liezi went to see him, and was fascinated by him. Returning, he told Hu-zi of his interview, and said, 'I considered your doctrine, my master, to be perfect, but I have found another which is superior to it.' Hu-zi replied, 'I have communicated to you but the outward letter of my doctrine, and have not communicated its reality and spirit; and do you think that you are in possession of it? However many hens there be, if there be not the cock among them, how should they lay (real) eggs? When you confront the world with your doctrine, you are sure to show in your countenance (all that is in your mind), and so enable (this) man to succeed in interpreting your physiognomy. Try and come to me with him, that I may show myself to him.'

On the morrow, accordingly, Liezi came with the man and saw Hu-zi. When they went out, the wizard said, 'Alas! your master is a dead man. He will not live;– not for ten days more! I saw something strange about him – I saw the ashes (of his life) all slaked with water!' When Liezi reentered, he wept till the front of his jacket was wet with his tears, and told Hu-zi what the man had said. Hu-zi said, 'I showed myself to him with the forms of (vegetation beneath) the earth. There were the sprouts indeed, but without (any appearance

of) growth or regularity:– he seemed to see me with the springs of my (vital) power closed up. Try and come to me with him again.'

Next day, accordingly, Liezi brought the man again and saw Hu-zi. When they went out, the man said, 'It is a fortunate thing for your master that he met with me. He will get better; he has all the signs of living! I saw the balance (of the springs of life) that had been stopped (inclining in his favour).' Liezi went in, and reported these words to his master, who said, 'I showed myself to him after the pattern of the earth (beneath the) sky. Neither semblance nor reality entered (into my exhibition), but the springs (of life) were issuing from beneath my feet;– he seemed to see me with the springs of vigorous action in full play. Try and come with him again.'

Next day Liezi came with the man again, and again saw Hu-zi with him. When they went out, the wizard said, 'Your master is never the same. I cannot understand his physiognomy. Let him try to steady himself, and I will again view him.' Liezi went in and reported this to Hu-zi, who said, 'This time I showed myself to him after the pattern of the grand harmony (of the two elemental forces), with the superiority inclining to neither. He seemed to see me with the springs of (vital) power in equal balance. Where the water wheels about from (the movements of) a dugong, there is an abyss; where it does so from the arresting (of its course), there is an abyss; where it does so, and the water keeps flowing on, there is an abyss. There are nine abysses with their several names, and I have only exhibited three of them. Try and come with him again.'

Next day they came, and they again saw Hu-zi. But before he had settled himself in his position, the wizard lost himself and ran away. 'Pursue him,' said Hu-zi, and Liezi did so, but could not come up with him. He returned, and told Hu-zi, saying, 'There is an end of him; he is lost; I could not find him.' Hu-zi rejoined, 'I was showing him myself after the pattern of what was before I began to come from my author. I confronted him with pure vacancy, and an easy indifference. He did not know what I meant to represent. Now he thought it was the idea of exhausted strength, and now that of an onward flow, and therefore he ran away.'

After this, Liezi considered that he had not yet begun to learn (his master's doctrine). He returned to his house, and for three years did not go out. He did the cooking for his wife. He fed the pigs as if he were feeding men. He took no part or interest in occurring affairs. He put away the carving and sculpture about him, and returned to pure simplicity. Like a clod of earth he stood there in his bodily presence. Amid all distractions he was (silent) and shut up in himself. And in this way he continued to the end of his life.

6. Non-action (makes its exemplifier) the lord of all fame; non-action (serves him as) the treasury of all plans; non-action (fits him for) the burden of all offices; non-action (makes him) the lord of all wisdom. The range of his action is inexhaustible, but there is nowhere any trace of his presence. He fulfils all that he has received from Heaven, but he does not see that he was the recipient of anything. A pure vacancy (of all purpose) is what characterises him. When the perfect man employs his mind, it is a mirror. It conducts nothing and anticipates nothing; it responds to (what is before it), but does not retain it. Thus, he is able to deal successfully with all things, and injures none.

7. The Ruler of the Southern Ocean was Shu, the Ruler of the Northern Ocean was Hu, and the Ruler of the Centre was Chaos. Shu and Hu were continually meeting in the land of Chaos, who treated them very well. They consulted together how they might repay his kindness, and said, 'Men all have seven orifices for the purpose of seeing, hearing, eating, and breathing, while this (poor) Ruler alone has not one. Let us try and make them for him.' Accordingly, they dug one orifice in him every day; and at the end of seven days Chaos died.

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III. WHAT CAN WE KNOW: DESCARTES AND THE MEDITATIONS ON FIRST PHILOSOPHY

A. Meditation One and the Modern World View

1. Introduction to René Descartes

Descartes was descended from a family of well to do lawyers and educated at the newly founded Jesuit College of La Flèche. He likely attended La Flèche for 7-8 years from the age of 10 to 17 or 18. At La Flèche he studied Latin and Greek, classical poets and Cicero, mathematics, and three years of philosophy based on the philosophy of Aristotle. At the time Descartes was at La Flèche, natural philosophical systems other than Aristotle's were beginning to gain currency in Europe. Among the important changes in the intellectual life of the era was the discovery of the moons of Jupiter by Galileo in 1610. This was used to argue for an understanding of the universe, a heliocentric understanding, that was radically different from the geocentric universe argued by Aristotle and the Roman Catholic church. Galileo was declared a heretic by the Catholic church. Descartes feared a similar fate and throughout his life attempted to avoid any religious controversy. This avoidance of religious controversy was particularly important given the schism of the Protestant Reformation.

Descartes eventually received a law degree, but he never practiced law. Instead became a "gentleman soldier" in the wars between France and Spain.

On the night of November 10, 1619, Descartes had three dreams that he interpreted as telling him he should reform all knowledge. He began this by reforming philosophy. Like most of the other thinkers of his time, Descartes believed the principles of the other sciences must be built upon the foundation of philosophy.

During the 1620s Descartes travelled in France and Italy and worked on his *Rules for the Direction of the Mind*. By 1628 he had completed about half of the *Rules*, which he then abandoned. It was published posthumously in 1701. He moved to the Netherlands where he worked on meteorology and metaphysics. In the later field he eventually published *Discourse on the Method* (in French, 1637) and then his *Meditations on First Philosophy*.

Prior to the publication of his *Meditations on First Philosophy*, Descartes sent his document to "the twenty or thirty most learned theologians" (these actually included both theologians — scholars who specialize in the study of God (*Theos*) and God's works — and philosophers) soliciting from them objections to his arguments. When his *Meditations* were published, they were published (1641) with the objections that had been submitted to him and Descartes' replies to these objections.

After the publication of the *Meditations*, Descartes devoted himself to studying and writing on physics (*Principles of Philosophy, 1644*), physiology (where his incomplete writings were published posthumously) and, then, in the *Passions of the Soul*, on behavioral physiology including the emotions (in French, 1649).

In the broad range of his research and publication record, we can see Descartes as the paradigmatic natural philosopher for whom all areas of philosophy and the natural world were suitable topics for research and publication. This sort of scholarly activity is profoundly different from the highly specialized research that is characteristic of modern scholarship.

In 1649, Descartes accepted an invitation of Queen Christina of Sweden to become her court philosopher.

While in Sweden he composed the Statutes of the Swedish Royal Academy. He also became ill, never recovered, and died on 11 February 1650. Descartes' skull can be viewed at the Musée de l'Homme in Paris

2. Meditations on First Philosophy

The purpose of the Descartes Meditations on First Philosophy is to provide a foundation for knowledge. This foundation for knowledge constructed is based on Descartes' view that **knowledge = certainty = indubitability**. "Indubitable" means "beyond the possibility of doubt." Descartes' basic view is that we can only truly say that we know when we are certain that what we *claim* to know is true. You only know whether the sun is out if you are certain of the truth of this claim. Are you certain, for example, that there is such a place as New Zealand? If you are, what gives you this certainty?

In understanding what Descartes means by "certain" it is helpful to distinguish between *psychological certainty* and *epistemic certainty*. One is *psychologically certain* if one is so convinced of the truth of a belief that one will not consider the possibility that it is not true. One is *epistemically certain* if one does consider all possible reasons to doubt the truth of claim and one concludes that there is no possible reason to doubt the truth of the claim. Thus, for Descartes, a claim is certain if it is indubitable or beyond all possible doubt. If it is certain in such a way, then it is known to be true.

Another example may help. You probably believe you have bones. You probably have never seen your bones. However, you may have seen images of what you believe are your bones and you may, if you have been in a severe accident, even have seen what you believe to be your bones. But are you epistemically certain that you have bones? Have you considered all the possible reasons to doubt you have bones?

In order to answer this question and other questions like it, in "Meditation One" of his *Meditations on First Philosophy* Descartes applies his **method of doubt**. The method of doubt uses skeptical doubt to see if there is anything that cannot be doubted. Using this method Descartes would subject your belief to three questions. These questions are the basis for what Descartes calls "**systematic doubt**." Systematic doubt is doubt directed at everything that can be doubted.

> First, he would ask, are our senses dubitable?
>
> (Of course, our senses often present to the mind sensations that do not reflect the way things really are. Think about optical illusions or mirages.)
>
> Second, is it possible that you are dreaming without knowing it?
>
> (Of course, have you ever thought you had woken only to find yourself still dreaming?)
>
> Finally, is it possible that the world was created by a being who created the world with the purpose of deceiving you about what you believe? (This is the evil demon or demon deceiver hypothesis.)
>
> (Of course, it is *possible*. One may not have reason to believe it, but it might be true. Think about the film *The Matrix* or about virtual reality simulations.)

Given that your senses deceive you, you might be dreaming and you might be living in a simulation, your belief that you have bones, while perhaps psychologically certain, is not epistemically certain.

As was written above, Descartes systematically doubts everything it is possible to doubt. He then reflects

on all that he doubts ad determines whether, given this method, anything remains that is indubitable. If anything remains that is indubitable, it is certain. If it is certain, then it is known to be true.

This Crash Course video may be helpful with thinking this through:

A YouTube element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: https://whatisphilosophy.pressbooks.sunycreate.cloud/?p=114

In "Meditation One" of his *Meditations*, Descartes presents his method of doubt as the first step in a series of steps whose goal is to find epistemic certainty and metaphysical truth.

Note: Descartes writes in a very careful step-by step fashion. He often repeats and reviews what he has previously said. This is not easy reading and it gets more difficult as the *Meditations* proceed. Read through each Meditation once from start to finish and understand what you can. Then, reread it again and try to understand the some of the details of the argument. Then come to class and we will discuss the Meditation. Use the Summary and Response paper to put the gist of the argument in your own words.

Also, Descartes' *Meditations* are written under the assumption that any careful and rational thinker will come to the same conclusions that Descartes comes to. Try to be such a thinker. Follow Descartes' steps and see if your reach the same conclusions he does. If you do not, try to determine the reasons why.

About the Translation

The text of Descartes' *Meditations* included here is used with permission from https://www.earlymoderntexts.com/, ©2010–2015 Jonathan Bennett.

Bennett does not attempt to provide a literal translation of Descartes' *Meditations*. His goal is to provide a translation that is both accurate but also accessible to the general reader. An example of this is the conversation between "Hopeful" and "Doubtful" in "Meditation One." There is no such conversation in Descartes' original text. As you read Bennett's translation pay careful attention to Bennett's notes and comments. [1])

3. First Meditation: On what can be called into doubt

Some years ago I was struck by how many false things I had believed, and by how doubtful was the structure of beliefs that I had based on them. I realized that if I wanted to establish anything in the sciences that was stable and likely to last, I needed—just once in my life—to demolish everything completely and start again from the foundations. It looked like an enormous task, and I decided to wait until I was old enough to be sure that there was nothing to be gained from putting it off any longer. I have now delayed it for so long that I have no excuse for going on planning to do it rather than getting to work. So today I have set all my worries aside and arranged for myself a clear stretch of free time. I am here quite alone, and at last I will devote myself, sincerely and without holding back, to demolishing my opinions.

Exercises

1. Reread this first paragraph of "Meditation One." There is a progression of Descartes' thought process.

The main point he makes in the first sentence is:

1.

The, in the second sentence he says that because of 1, he has to do what?

2.

1. Bennet supplies the following note about his translation: [Brackets] enclose editorial explanations. Small ·dots· enclose material that has been added, but can be read as though it were part of the original text. Occasional ·bullets, and also indenting of passages that are not quotations, are meant as aids to grasping the structure of a sentence or a thought. Every four-point ellipsis indicates the omission of a brief passage that seems to present more difficulty than it is worth. In his title for this work, Descartes is following a tradition (started by Aristotle) which uses 'first philosophy' as a label for metaphysics. (Bennett's note)

And, furthermore, in order to do 2, he has to:

3.

I can do this without showing that all my beliefs are false, which is probably more than I could ever manage. My reason tells me that as well as withholding assent from propositions that are obviously ·false, I should also withhold it from ones that are ·not completely certain and indubitable. So, all I need, for the purpose of rejecting all my opinions, is to find in each of them at least some reason for doubt. I can do this without going through them one by one, which would take forever: once the foundations of a building have been undermined, the rest collapses of its own accord; so, I will go straight for the basic principles on which all my former beliefs rested.

Exercises

2. In the previous paragraph Descartes says that he needs to "for the purpose of rejecting all my opinions, is to find in each of them at least some reason for doubt." How does he declare he will go about this process of finding a reason to doubt his previous held principles?

Whatever I have accepted until now as most true has come to me through my senses. But occasionally I have found that they have deceived me, and it is unwise to trust completely those who have deceived us even once.

[The next paragraph presents a series of considerations back and forth. It is set out here as a discussion between two people, but that isn't how Descartes presented it.]

Hopeful: Yet although the senses sometimes deceive us about objects that are very small or distant, that doesn't apply to my belief that I am here, sitting by the fire, wearing a winter dressing-gown, holding this piece of paper in my hands, and so on. It seems to be quite impossible to doubt beliefs like these, which come from the senses. Another example: how can I doubt that these hands or this whole body are mine? To doubt such things I would have to liken myself to brain-damaged madmen who are convinced they are kings when really they are paupers, or say they are dressed in purple when they are naked, or that they are pumpkins, or made of glass. Such people are insane, and I would be thought equally mad if I modelled myself on them.

Doubtful (sarcastically): What a brilliant piece of reasoning! As if I were not a man who sleeps at night and often has all the same experiences while asleep as madmen do when awake—indeed sometimes even more improbable ones. Often in my dreams I am convinced of just such familiar events— that I am sitting by the fire in my dressing-gown—when in fact I am lying undressed in bed!

Hopeful: Yet right now my eyes are certainly wide open when I look at this piece of paper; I shake my head and it isn't asleep; when I rub one hand against the other, I do it deliberately and know what I am doing. This wouldn't all happen with such clarity to someone asleep.

Doubtful: Indeed! As if I didn't remember other occasions when I have been tricked by exactly similar thoughts while asleep! As I think about this more carefully, I realize that there is never any reliable way of distinguishing being awake from being asleep. This discovery makes me feel dizzy, [joke:] which itself reinforces the notion that I may be asleep!

Suppose then that I am dreaming—it isn't true that I, with my eyes open, am moving my head and stretching out my hands. Suppose, indeed that I don't even have hands or any body at all. Still, it has to be admitted that the visions that come in sleep are like paintings: they must have been made as copies of real things; so at least these general kinds of things— eyes, head, hands and the body as a whole—must be real and not imaginary. For even when painters try to depict sirens and satyrs with the most extraordinary bodies, they simply jumble up the limbs of different kinds of real animals, rather than inventing natures that are entirely new. If they do succeed in thinking up something completely fictitious and unreal—not remotely like anything ever seen before—at least the colours used in the picture must be real. Similarly, although these general kinds of things— eyes, head, hands and so on—could be imaginary, there is no denying that certain even simpler and more universal kinds of things are real. These are the elements out of which we make all our mental images of things—the true and also the false ones.

Exercises

3. What is the role of the "suppose" at the start of the paragraph above? How does Descartes use this to further his rejection of his previous opinions? What are the shortcomings of his approach up to this point?

These simpler and more universal kinds include body, and extension; the shape of extended things; their quantity, size and number; the places things can be in, the time through which they can last, and so on.

So, it seems reasonable to conclude that physics, astronomy, medicine, and all other sciences dealing with things that have complex structures are doubtful; while arithmetic, geometry and other studies of the simplest and most general things—whether they really exist in nature or not—contain something certain and indubitable. For whether I am awake or asleep, two plus three makes five, and a square has only four sides. It seems impossible to suspect that such obvious truths might be false.

However, I have for many years been sure that there is an all-powerful God who made me to be the sort of creature that I am. How do I know that he hasn't brought it about that there is no earth, no sky, nothing that takes up space, no shape, no size, no place, while making sure that all these things appear to me to exist? Anyway, I sometimes think that others go wrong even when they think they have the most perfect knowledge; so how do I know that I myself don't go wrong every time I add two and three or count the sides of a square? Well, ·you might say·, God would not let me be deceived like that, because he is said to be supremely good. But, ·I reply·, if God's goodness would stop him from letting me be deceived ·all the time, you would expect it to stop him from allowing me to be deceived even ·occasionally; yet clearly I sometimes am deceived.

Some people would deny the existence of such a powerful God rather than believe that everything else is uncertain. Let us grant them—for purposes of argument—that there is no God, and theology is fiction. On their view, then, I am a product of fate or chance or a long chain of causes and effects. But the less powerful they make my original cause, the more likely it is that I am so imperfect as to be deceived all the

time—because deception and error seem to be imperfections. Having no answer to these arguments, I am driven back to the position that doubts can properly be raised about any of my former beliefs. I don't reach this conclusion in a flippant or casual manner, but on the basis of powerful and well thought-out reasons. So in future, if I want to discover any certainty, I must withhold my assent from these former beliefs just as carefully as I withhold it from obvious falsehoods.

It isn't enough merely to have noticed this, though; I must make an effort to remember it. My old familiar opinions keep coming back, and against my will they capture my belief. It is as though they had a right to a place in my belief-system as a result of long occupation and the law of custom. These habitual opinions of mine are indeed highly probable; although they are in a sense doubtful, as I have shown, it is more reasonable to believe than to deny them. But if I go on viewing them in that light I shall never get out of the habit of confidently assenting to them. To conquer that habit, therefore, I had better switch right around and pretend (for a while) that these former opinions of mine are utterly false and imaginary. I shall do this until I have something to counter-balance the weight of old opinion, and the distorting influence of habit no longer prevents me from judging correctly. However far I go in my distrustful attitude, no actual harm will come of it, because my project won't affect how I ·act, but only how I ·go about acquiring knowledge.

So I shall suppose that some malicious, powerful, cunning demon has done all he can to deceive me—rather than this being done by God, who is supremely good and the source of truth. I shall think that the sky, the air, the earth, colours, shapes, sounds and all external things are merely dreams that the demon has contrived as traps for my judgment. I shall consider myself as having no hands or eyes, or flesh, or blood or senses, but as having falsely believed that I had all these things. I shall stubbornly persist in this train of thought; and even if I can't learn any truth, I shall at least do what I can do, which is to be on my guard against accepting any falsehoods, so that the deceiver—however powerful and cunning he may be—will be unable to affect me in the slightest. This will be hard work, though, and a kind of laziness pulls me back into my old ways. Like a prisoner who dreams that he is free, starts to suspect that it is merely a dream, and wants to go on dreaming rather than waking up, so I am content to slide back into my old opinions; I fear being shaken out of them because I am afraid that my peaceful sleep may be followed by hard labour when I wake, and that I shall have to struggle not in the light but in the imprisoning darkness of the problems I have raised.

Exercises

4. Here Descartes presents the reader with another "suppose," what is its function in his project to doubt everything that it is possible to doubt? In light of this supposition, is there anything that remains that is beyond the possibility of doubt? If so, what is it?

5. Do you have any questions or additional comments?

B. Meditation Two and the Cogito Argument

1. Introduction to Meditation Two

After presenting his method of doubt in "Meditation One," Descartes begins "Meditation Two" by writing, "Yesterday's meditation raised doubts — ones that are too serious to be ignored — which I can see no way of resolving. I feel like someone who is suddenly dropped into a deep whirlpool that tumbles him around so that he can neither stand on the bottom nor swim to the top."

In Meditation Two Descartes tries to think his way out of this whirlpool.

He begins by acknowledging what had been previously evident to the senses is no longer certain to him and he asks whether it follows that he cannot even be certain of his own existence. His response to this question is Descartes' first step back from his systematic doubt.

Descartes states that if he is doubting, then there must exist some x some that doubts. In other words, the very fact that he can ask whether he exists, is a good reason to conclude that he must exist.

This leads to the following argument:

> If there is nothing that doubts, then there is no doubt.
> There is doubt.
>
> Therefore, there is not nothing that doubts.

(This is a valid form of hypothetical syllogism called modus tollens.[1])

> Therefore, there is a thing that doubts. (Double negative gives positive.)

As Descartes puts it in his Meditation, "So after thoroughly thinking the matter through I conclude that this proposition, I am, I exist, must be true whenever I assert it or think it."

Also, since doubt is a type of thought, he also concludes that he knows he exists as a thing that thinks. The Latin for this is *res cogitans*. From this we get the famous *cogito ergo sum*, "thought therefore existence." All Descartes knows (remember IS CERTAIN OF) is that he exists and that he is a thing that thinks. He does

1. **A syllogism is a deductive argument form that consists of two premises and a conclusion. A deductive argument is an argument where, if the premises are assumed to be true, the conclusion must follow from the truth of the premises. Deductive arguments are either valid or invalid. Whether an argument is valid depend on the form of the argument.** For example, *Modus Tollens*, which id a valid argument, has the form: If S then P./Not P./ Therefore, not S. An instance of this: If an animal is a Weimaraner, then it is a dog./The animal is not a dog./Therefore it is not a Weimaraner. *Denying the antecedent* is an invalid deductive argument form. An instance of this: If an animal is a Weimaraner, then it is a dog./The animal is not a An instance of this: If an animal is a Weimaraner, then it is a dog./The animal is not a dog./Therefore it is not a Weimaraner./Therefore it is not a dog. A valid argument with true premises is a **sound argument**. **Sound arguments give use proof of the conclusion**. Distinguishing valid and invalid arguments is a very useful life skill.

not know whether anything else exists. He also does not know whether, beyond the conclusion that he exists as a thing that thinks, he is anything else. He does not know for certain whether he is a human being. He does not know whether he is dreaming. He does not know whether he has a body. All he knows is **"I am, I exist, must be true whenever I assert it or think it."**[2]

Even to Descartes, this conclusion seems counterintuitive. So, next, Descartes proceeds to examine a drop of wax from the candle he is using to write by (yes, no electric lights in the 1640s). He wonders that this candle, this seemingly physical thing, this piece of matter (*res extensia* — an extended thing) surely seems more real than the mind that grasps it. However, when he examines the wax more closely, he realizes that the properties of the wax exist only in the eye of the mind. Sensations are a kind of thought. And, as he puts the wax by the stove (In the French edition of the *Meditations* Descartes describes himself as sitting and sleeping in a "*poêle*" which translates literally as "stove." What is meant here is that Descartes was in a room heated by a large masonry stove — remember, no central heating! — and not, as some claim, that he was in a stove.) it melts. The wax's properties change. But his mind still understands that it is melted wax and not some new entity. On the basis of this, Descartes concludes that everything he believes about the wax is believed only through his thoughts. At this point he does know whether he is dreaming, or whether his senses are deceiving him, or whether he is living in a simulation. He just knows that he exists and he is a thinking thing. So, as far as he, and as far as we, know at this point in the *Meditations* it is the thought about the wax that is real. There is no way to be certain whether the wax as a material entity that exists separately from the thought of it is real.

Read "Second Meditation: The nature of the human mind, and how it is better known than the body"

2. Second Meditation: The nature of the human mind, and how it is better known than the body

Yesterday's meditation raised doubts—ones that are too serious to be ignored—which I can see no way of resolving. I feel like someone who is suddenly dropped into a deep whirlpool that tumbles him around so that he can neither stand on the bottom nor swim to the top. However, I shall force my way up, and try once more to carry out the project that I started on yesterday. I will set aside anything that admits of the slightest doubt, treating it as though I had found it to be outright false; and I will carry on like that until I find something certain, or—at worst—until I become certain that there is no certainty. Archimedes said that if he had one firm and immovable point he could lift the world ·with a long enough lever·; so I too can hope for great things if I manage to find just one little thing that is solid and certain.

Exercises

1. In the last sentence of this paragraph what does Descartes say he is looking for? How does his

2. Remember, again, the difference between knowledge and belief and Descartes' definition of knowledge.

reference to “Archimedes” help him to assert this?

I will suppose, then, that everything I see is fictitious. I will believe that my memory tells me nothing but lies. I have no senses. Body, shape, extension, movement and place are illusions. So what remains true? Perhaps just the one fact that nothing is certain!

Exercises

2. Again, Descartes is “supposing.” What is he supposing here and why does he suppose it?

[This paragraph is presented as a further to-and-fro argument between two people. Remember that this isn’t how Descartes wrote it.]

***Hopeful**: Still, how do I know that there isn’t something— not on that list—about which there is no room for even the slightest doubt? Isn’t there a God (call him what you will) who gives me the thoughts I am now having?*

***Doubtful**: But why do I think this, since I might myself be the author of these thoughts?*

***Hopeful**: But then doesn’t it follow that I am, at least, something?*

***Doubtful**: This is very confusing, because I have just said that I have no senses and no body, and I am so bound up with a body and with senses that one would think that I can’t exist without them. Now that I have convinced myself that there is nothing in the world—no sky, no earth, no minds, no bodies—does it follow that I don’t exist either?*

***Hopeful**: No it does not follow; for if I convinced myself of something then I certainly existed.*

***Doubtful**: But there is a supremely powerful and cunning deceiver who deliberately deceives me all the time!*

***Hopeful**: Even then, if he is deceiving me I undoubtedly exist: let him deceive me all he can, he will never bring it about that I am nothing while I think I am something. So after thoroughly thinking the matter through I conclude that this proposition, I am, I exist, must be true whenever I assert it or think it.*

Exercises

3. Descartes, here, reaches the key conclusion of the Meditation Two line of argument. What is

this conclusion? And what is the reasoning that leads him to conclude it?

But this 'I' that must exist—I still don't properly understand what it is; so I am at risk of confusing it with something else, thereby falling into error in the very item of knowledge that I maintain is the most certain and obvious of all. To get straight about what this 'I' is, I shall go back and think some more about what I believed myself to be before I started this meditation. I will eliminate from those beliefs anything that could be even slightly called into question by the arguments I have been using, which will leave me with only beliefs about myself that are certain and unshakable.

Well, then, what did I think I was? A man. But what is a man? Shall I say 'a rational animal'? No; for then I should have to ask what an animal is, and what rationality is—each question would lead me on to other still harder ones, and this would take more time than I can spare. Let me focus instead on the beliefs that spontaneously and naturally came to me whenever I thought about what I was. The first such belief was that I had a face, hands, arms and the whole structure of bodily parts that corpses also have—I call it the body. The next belief was that I ate and drank, that I moved about, and that I engaged in sense-perception and thinking; these things, I thought, were done by the soul. [In this work 'the soul' = 'the mind'; it has no religious implications.] If I gave any thought to what this soul was like, I imagined it to be something thin and filmy— like a wind or fire or ether—permeating my more solid parts. I was more sure about the body, though, thinking that I knew exactly what sort of thing it was. If I had tried to put my conception of the body into words, I would have said this:

> *By a 'body' I understand whatever has a definite shape and position, and can occupy a ·region of· space in such a way as to keep every other body out of it; it can be perceived by touch, sight, hearing, taste or smell, and can be moved in various ways.*

Exercises

4. Here Descartes defines "body." "A body" is contrasted with "a mind." What is the difference between the two? Where, for example, is your liver? Where, for example, are your thoughts about this class? How and you find where your liver is? How can you find where your thoughts are?

I would have added that a body can't start up movements by itself, and can move only through being moved by other things that bump into it. It seemed to me quite out of character for a body to be able to ·initiate movements, or to able to ·sense and think, and I was amazed that certain bodies—·namely, human ones·—could do those things.

Exercises

5. Here Descartes makes a brief excursion into the physics of bodies. In addition to being a philosopher, Descartes was an important and innovative mathematician and physicist. What is his chief claim about bodies and motions here? Is he correct about this? If not, why not?

But now that I am supposing there is a supremely powerful and malicious deceiver who has set out to trick me in every way he can—now what shall I say that I am? Can I now claim to have any of the features that I used to think belong to a body? When I think about them really carefully, I find that they are all open to doubt: I shan't waste time by showing this about each of them separately. Now, what about the features that I attributed to the soul? Nutrition or movement? Since now ·I am pretending that· I don't have a body, these are mere fictions. Sense-perception? One needs a body in order to perceive; and, besides, when dreaming I have seemed to perceive through the senses many things that I later realized I had not perceived in that way. Thinking? At last I have discovered it—thought! This is the one thing that can't be separated from me. I am, I exist—that is certain. But for how long? For as long as I am thinking. But perhaps no longer than that; for it might be that if I stopped thinking I would stop existing; and ·I have to treat that possibility as though it were actual, because· my present policy is to reject everything that isn't necessarily true. Strictly speaking, then, I am simply a thing that thinks—a mind, or soul, or intellect, or reason, these being words whose meaning I have only just come to know. Still, I am a real, existing thing. What kind of a thing? I have answered that: a thinking thing.

What else am I? I will use my imagination to see if I am anything more. I am not that structure of limbs and organs that is called a human body; nor am I a thin vapour that permeates the limbs—a wind, fire, air, breath, or whatever I imagine; for I have supposed all these things to be nothing ·because I have supposed all bodies to be nothing·. Even if I go on supposing them to be nothing, I am still something. But these things that I suppose to be nothing because they are unknown to me—might they not in fact be identical with the I of which I am aware? I don't know; and just now I shan't discuss the matter, because I can form opinions only about things that I know. I know that I exist, and I am asking: what is this I that I know? My knowledge of it can't depend on things of whose existence I am still unaware; so it can't depend on anything that I invent in my imagination. The word 'invent' points to what is wrong with relying on my imagination in this matter: if I used imagination to show that I was something or other, that would be mere invention, mere story-telling; for imagining is simply contemplating the shape or image of a bodily thing. [Descartes here relies on a theory of his about the psychology of imagination.] That makes imagination suspect, for while I know for sure that I exist, I know that everything relating to the nature of body ·including imagination· could be mere dreams; so it would be silly for me to say 'I will use my imagination to get a clearer understanding of what I am'—as silly, indeed, as to say 'I am now awake, and see some truth; but I shall deliberately fall asleep so as to see even more, and more truly, in my dreams'! If my mind is to get a clear understanding of its own nature, it had better not look to the imagination for it.

Well, then, what am I? A thing that thinks. What is that? A thing that doubts, understands, affirms, denies, wants, refuses, and also imagines and senses.

That is a long list of attributes for me to have—and it really is I who have them all. Why should it not be? Isn't it one and the same 'I' who now

> *doubts almost everything, understands some things,*
>
> *affirms this one thing—·namely, that I exist and think·,*

denies everything else, wants to know more, refuses to be deceived,

imagines many things involuntarily, and

is aware of others that seem to come from the senses?

Isn't all this just as true as the fact that I exist, even if I am in a perpetual dream, and even if my creator is doing his best to deceive me? Which of all these activities is distinct from my thinking? Which of them can be said to be separate from myself? The fact that it is I who doubt and understand and want is so obvious that I can't see how to make it any clearer. But the 'I' who imagines is also this same 'I'. For even if (as I am pretending) none of the things that I imagine really exist, I really do imagine them, and this is part of my thinking. Lastly, it is also this same 'I' who senses, or is aware of bodily things seemingly through the senses. Because I may be dreaming, I can't say for sure that I now see the flames, hear the wood crackling, and feel the heat of the fire; but I certainly seem to see, to hear, and to be warmed. This cannot be false; what is called 'sensing' is strictly just this seeming, and when 'sensing' is understood in this restricted sense of the word it too is simply thinking.

Exercises

6. Explain this "I" that Descartes says he is. How is this different from the "I" you think of yourself as being?

All this is starting to give me a better understanding of what I am. But I still can't help thinking that bodies—of which I form mental images and which the senses investigate—are much more clearly known to me than is this puzzling 'I' that can't be pictured in the imagination. It would be surprising if this were right, though; for it would be surprising if I had a clearer grasp of things that I realize are doubtful, unknown and foreign to me—·namely, bodies·—than I have of what is true and known— namely my own self. But I see what the trouble is: I keep drifting towards that error because my mind likes to wander freely, refusing to respect the boundaries that truth lays down. Very well, then; I shall let it run free for a while, so that when the time comes to rein it in it won't be so resistant to being pulled back.

Let us consider the things that people ordinarily think they understand best of all, namely the bodies that we touch and see. I don't mean bodies in general—for our general thoughts are apt to be confused—but one particular body: this piece of wax, for example. It has just been taken from the honeycomb; it still tastes of honey and has the scent of the flowers from which the honey was gathered; its colour, shape and size are plain to see; it is hard, cold and can be handled easily; if you rap it with your knuckle it makes a sound. In short, it has everything that seems to be needed for a body to be known perfectly clearly. But as I speak these words I hold the wax near to the fire, and look! The taste and smell vanish, the colour changes, the shape is lost, the size increases; the wax becomes liquid and hot; you can hardly touch it, and it no longer makes a sound when you strike it. But is it still the same wax? Of course it is; no-one denies this. So what was it about the wax that I understood so clearly? Evidently it was not any of the features that the senses told me of; for all of them— brought to me through taste, smell, sight, touch or hearing—have now altered, yet it is still the same wax.

Perhaps what I now think about the wax indicates what its nature was all along. If that is right, then the wax was not the sweetness of the honey, the scent of the flowers, the whiteness, the shape, or the sound, but was rather a body that recently presented itself to me in those ways but now appears differently. But what exactly is this thing that I am now imagining? Well, if we take away whatever doesn't belong to the wax (·that is, everything that the wax could be without·), what is left is merely something extended, flexible and changeable. What do 'flexible' and 'changeable' mean here? I can imaginatively picture this piece of wax changing from round to square, from square to triangular, and so on. But that isn't what changeability is. In knowing that the wax is changeable I understand that it can go through endlessly many changes of that kind, far more than I can depict in my imagination; so it isn't my imagination that gives me my grasp of the wax as flexible and changeable. Also, what does 'extended' mean? Is the wax's extension also unknown? It increases if the wax melts, and increases again if it boils; the wax can be extended in many more ways (·that is, with many more shapes·) than I will ever bring before my imagination. I am forced to conclude that the nature of this piece of wax isn't revealed by my imagination, but is perceived by the mind alone. (I am speaking of ·this particular piece of wax; the point is even clearer with regard to ·wax in general.) This wax that is perceived by the mind alone is, of course, the same wax that I see, touch, and picture in my imagination—in short the same wax I thought it to be from the start. But although my perception of it seemed to be a case of vision and touch and imagination, it isn't so and it never was. Rather, it is purely a scrutiny by the mind alone— formerly an imperfect and confused one, but now vivid and clear because I am now concentrating carefully on what the wax consists in.

Exercises

7. Reread the previous paragraphs carefully. What is that reveals to Descartes "the nature of this piece of wax"? Why do the changes the wax undergoes reveal it true nature?

As I reach this conclusion I am amazed at how prone to error my mind is. For although I am thinking all this out within myself, silently, I do it with the help of words, and I am at risk of being led astray by them. When the wax is in front of us, we say that we see it, not that we judge it to be there from its colour or shape; and this might make me think that knowledge of the wax comes from what the eye sees rather than from the perception of the mind alone. But ·this is clearly wrong, as the following example shows·. If I

look out of the window and see men crossing the square, as I have just done, I say that I see the men themselves, just as I say that I see the wax; yet do I see any more than hats and coats that could conceal robots? I judge that they are men. Something that I thought I saw with my eyes, therefore, was really grasped solely by my mind's faculty of judgment [= 'ability or capacity to make judgments'].

However, someone who wants to know more than the common crowd should be ashamed to base his doubts on ordinary ways of talking. Let us push ahead, then, and ask: When was my perception of the wax's nature more perfect and clear? Was it ·when I first looked at the wax, and thought I knew it through my senses? Or is it ·now, after I have enquired more carefully into the wax's nature and into how it is known? It would be absurd to hesitate in answering the question; for what clarity and sharpness was there in my earlier perception of the wax? Was there anything in it that ·a lower animal couldn't have? But when I consider the wax apart from its outward forms—take its clothes off, so to speak, and consider it

naked—then although my judgment may still contain errors, at least I am now having a perception of a sort that requires ·a human mind.

Exercises

8. Descartes here makes a distinction between what his mind can understand about the wax and what a lower mind cannot. What is the capacity of his mind that so-called "lower minds" do not have? Also, what does Descartes say about error here?

But what am I to say about this mind, or about myself? (So far, remember, I don't admit that there is anything to me except a mind.) What, I ask, is this 'I' that seems to perceive the wax so clearly? Surely, I am aware of ·my own self in a truer and more certain way than I am of ·the wax, and also in a much more distinct and evident way. What leads me to think that ·the wax exists—namely, that I see it— leads much more obviously to the conclusion that ·I exist. What I see might not really be the wax; perhaps I don't even have eyes with which to see anything. But when I see or think I see (I am not here distinguishing the two), it is simply not possible that I who am now thinking am not something. Similarly, that ·I exist follows from the other bases for judging that ·the wax exists – that I touch it, that I imagine it, or any other basis—and similarly for my bases for judging that anything else exists outside me. As I came to perceive the wax more distinctly by applying not just sight and touch but other considerations, all this too contributed to my knowing myself even more distinctly, because whatever goes into my ßperception of ·the wax or of any other body must do even more to establish the nature of ·my own mind. What comes to my mind from bodies, therefore, helps me to know my mind distinctly; yet all of that pales into insignificance—it is hardly worth mentioning—when compared with what my mind contains within itself that enables me to know it distinctly.

See! With no effort I have reached the place where I wanted to be! I now know that even bodies are perceived not by the senses or by imagination but by the intellect alone, not through their being touched or seen but through their being understood; and this helps me to know plainly that I can perceive my own mind more easily and clearly than I can anything else. Since the grip of old opinions is hard to shake off, however, I want to pause and meditate for a while on this new knowledge of mine, fixing it more deeply in my memory.

Exercises

9. Do you have any questions or additional comments?

C. Meditation Three: God and the foundation of knowledge

1. The Arguments in Meditation III

Meditation Three is long, complex, controversial and, yet, vitally important for Descartes' argument. The gist of Meditation Three is that Descartes constructs an argument (actually, two versions of the same type of argument) for the existence of God.

Remember, according to Descartes, for the conclusions such arguments to count as **knowledge**, those conclusions must be indubitable. The only way for Descartes reach indubitable conclusions is for him to present deductively valid arguments with indubitably true premises. Here is an example of how he proposes to do this.

Premise 1: *If I exist, then there must be a cause of my existence*.

Premise 2: *I exist.*

Conclusion: *Therefore, there must be a cause of my existence*.

This argument is another instance of a valid deductive argument form called "*modus ponens*." Recall from the note on the cogito argument in the second Meditation: an argument form is valid if and only if whenever the premises are true, the conclusion is necessary true. In other words, the truth of the premises entail the truth of the conclusion.

The form of *modus ponens* is:

1, If S, then P.

2. S

Therefore,

3. P.

This is valid because, if it is true that [whenever S is the case then P is the case], and it is true that [S is the case], then [P must be the case].

Exercises

1. Give at least two instances (examples) of *modus ponens*. In one of your examples use false premises.

Once we determine that an argument is valid, we only have to determine whether the premises are true. An argument is only sound if the premises are true and the argument is valid. In a sound argument the conclusion is proven to be true.

In the case of the argument above, the **first premise** is an application of the principle that something cannot come from nothing. In other words, what ever exist must have some cause of its existence. Therefore, if I exist, something must have caused my existence. The **second premise**, "I exist," has been demonstrated to be the case in Meditation II. Since the argument is valid and, according to Descartes, the premises are true, **the conclusion,** "there must be a cause of my existence," must also be true.

Exercises

2. Do you agree with Descartes that the premises in the argument above are indubitably true? Why or why not?

Meditation Three uses deductive arguments like this example to prove that God exists. The type of argument given in this example and the type of argument that Descartes uses in Meditation III are called "**cosmological arguments" or "causal arguments**." Cosmological arguments begin with some truth about the world and argue that for this truth about the world to be true God must have caused it to be true. Causal arguments argue that if something we know to be the case is true and it must have been caused by some other thing, then that other thing must be the case. We make causal arguments often.

Example:

This morning there are puddles in the street.

Puddles are caused by rain.

Therefore, it rained last night.

Exercises

3. Is this a sound argument? Explain?

For Descartes, the cosmological arguments he presents do not simply prove that **God exists**. They also prove that **God exists as a perfect being.** A perfect being cannot be a deceiver. Therefore, **God cannot be a deceiver**.

Exercises

4. This paragraph presents another valid deductive argument. Can you put it in a form similar to the example above?

Premise 1:

Premise 2:

Therefore,

Conclusion:

Assuming that he has proven that God exists and is no deceiver, Descartes then claims that the hypothetical doubt created by the possibility that he was created by a being whose intent in creating him was to deceive him is eliminated.

He then concludes Meditation Three by "contemplating God's greatness."

So, to summarize, the most important conclusions of Meditation Three are:

1. God exists.

2. God is the ultimate cause of the existence of the cogito.

3. God is a perfect being.

4. God is no deceiver.

5. The hypothesis that there is a deceiver deceiving me about everything I believe is false.

However, to fully understand Meditation Three it is important that you also understand how Descartes arrives at his conclusions and what the possible flaws in his argument are. Because he is claiming that his arguments are deductively valid, we can find flaws by either (1) determining that an argument is not valid or (2) determining that a premise is not necessarily true.

This is a good Meditation to train yourself in thinking about arguments. As you read and reread ask yourself: What are the premises? What is the conclusion? What is the form of the argument that makes the inference from the premises to the conclusion?

2. Reading Meditation Three

It might be helpful in your reading of Meditation Three to read it as divided into three sections. In the first, Descartes reflects on what he knows and on the nature of his ideas. In the second section, Descartes gives his first proof for the existence of God. In the third section, he gives his second proof for the existence of God.

The first section revisits the path of the argument up to this point and reviews the doubts he still has. He then says that while his doubts based on a deceiving God seem very weak, he needs to determine whether it is possible that he is so deceived.

He begins this project of determining how he might be so deceived by reviewing the different kinds of ideas he has. Because he only knows that he exists as a thing that thinks, the only evidence he has about what is true is based on his ideas. He distinguishes between three types of ideas. There are those that are innate and there are those that seem to be acquired through experience, and there are those that he creates.

He then distinguishes between those ideas he *believes to be true* by spontaneous impulse and those he *knows to be true* through the "light of nature" or "natural light." What is believed though natural light, he claims, is without doubt. However, the impulse to believe something, such as the impulse to believe that a world exists outside of our ideas about the world, can mislead one.

Descartes also distinguishes between three types of reality. These are objective reality, formal reality, eminent reality, and the reality that is transferred from cause to effect.

Objective reality is the reality an idea of an object has to the person who has the idea. Some things *seem* real, even if they might be in a dream. For example, your idea of the building you are sitting in as you read this has an objective reality to you. However, currently, you may only be dreaming that you are in that building.

Formal reality is what we usually call "reality." Formal reality is the reality of things outside of our minds such as material objects, if there are such things.

Eminent reality is the necessary reality of God. In Descartes view, eminent reality is the reality on which all other forms of reality depend — although at this point in the *Meditations* we are a long way from considering such claims.

Also, Descartes claims that the reality of a cause is, at least in part, transferred to its effect. This means that something that is less real cannot be the cause of the reality of something that is more real. So, a mountain is formally real, and gold is formally real. Perception leads to your having the objectively real idea of a mountain and of gold. This can cause you to have the idea of a gold mountain. However, and unfortunately, simply having this idea cannot cause a formally real gold mountain to exist!

Descartes put this all together in his two cosmological proofs for the existence of God.

In his first proof he examines all his ideas to determine whether any of his ideas seems to have a source other than himself. He finds that the idea of God stands out because the idea of God is the idea of a substance that is infinite, independent of other beings, supremely intelligent (omniscient), and supremely powerful (omnipotent). Descartes argues that he is finite and has none of these perfections that are intrinsic to his idea of God. Therefore, he argues, he cannot be the cause of his idea of God. Only a being who has these perfections — aka, God itself — can be the cause of this idea. Therefore, God exists as the cause of the idea of God.

The second proof for God's existence comes from the question of what could have caused Descartes himself

to exist. Descartes first argues that he could not have been the cause of his existence. The natural light shows us the to preserve a thing in existing is the same as causing a thing to exist. This is because there is nothing in the instance of the existence of a being that ensures its continued existence. Descartes claims he finds no evidence of the power to create and preserve his existence in himself, therefore there must be something outside of him that does this. He then considers whether the cause of his existence can be an entity with less power than God. He rejects this possibility and argues that because he exists as a thinking thing with an idea of God only God could cause him to exist.

On this basis, Descartes again claims to have demonstrated that God exists, and he furthermore concludes that the very idea of God must have been put into him like the mark of a craftsperson on a product created.

Then, finally, he concludes that God, as a perfect being cannot deceive. Deception in the product of imperfection.

Read "Meditation Three".

3. Third Meditation: God

Bennett's note to his translation:

[Before we move on, a translation matter should be confronted. It concerns the Latin adjectives

clarus and distinctus

the corresponding French adjectives

clair and distinct

and the corresponding English adjectives

'vivid' and 'clear'.

Every other translator of this work into English has put

'clear' and 'distinct'

and for a while the present translator in cowardly fashion followed suit.

But the usual translation is simply wrong, and we ought to free ourselves from it. The crucial point concerns clarus (and everything said about that here is equally true of the French clair). The word can mean 'clear' in our sense, and when Descartes uses it outside the clarus et distinctus phrase, it seems usually to be in that sense. But in that phrase he uses clarus in its other meaning—its more common meaning in Latin—of 'bright' or 'vivid' or the like, as in clara lux = 'broad daylight'. If in the phrase clarus et distinctus Descartes meant clarus in its lesser meaning of 'clear', then what is there left for 'distinctus' to mean? Descartes doesn't explain these terms here, but in his Principles of Philosophy 1:45–6 he does so—in a manner that completely condemns the usual translation. He writes: ***'I call a perception claram when it is present and accessible to the attentive mind—just as we say that we see something clare when it is present to the eye's gaze and stimulates it with a sufficient degree of strength and accessibility. I call a perception distinctam if, as well as being clara, it is so sharply separated from all other perceptions that every part of it is clarum.***

The example of pain shows that a perception can be clara without being distincta but not vice versa. When for example someone feels an intense pain, his perception of it is clarissima, but it isn't always clear, because people often get this perception muddled with an obscure judgment they make about something that they think exists in the painful spot. . . .' and so on. Of course he is not saying anything as stupid as that intense pain is always clear! His point is that pain is vivid, up-front, not shady or obscure. And for an idea to be distincta is for every nook and cranny of it to be vivid; which is not a bad way of saying that it is in our sense 'clear'.]

I will now shut my eyes, block my ears, cut off all my senses. I will regard all my mental images of bodily things as empty, false and worthless (if I could, I would clear them out of my mind altogether). I will get into conversation with myself, examine myself more deeply, and try in this way gradually to know myself more intimately. I am a thing that thinks, i.e that doubts, affirms, denies, understands some things, is ignorant of many others, wills, and refuses. This thing also imagines and has sensory perceptions; for, as I remarked before, even if the objects of my sensory experience and imagination don't exist outside me, still sensory perception and imagination themselves, considered simply as mental events, certainly do occur in me.

That lists everything that I truly know, or at least everything I have, up to now, discovered that I know. Now I will look more carefully to see whether I have overlooked other facts about myself. I am certain that I am a thinking thing. Doesn't that tell me what it takes for me to be certain about anything? In this first item of knowledge there is simply a vivid and clear perception of what I am asserting; this wouldn't be enough to make me certain of its truth if it could ever turn out that something that I perceived so vividly and clearly was false. So I now seem to be able to lay it down as a general rule that whatever I perceive very vividly and clearly is true.

I previously accepted as perfectly certain and evident many things that I afterwards realized were doubtful—the earth, sky, stars, and everything else that I took in through the senses—but in those cases what I perceived clearly were merely the ideas or thoughts of those things that came into my mind; and I am still not denying that those ideas occur within me. But I used also to believe that my ideas came from things outside that resembled them in all respects. Indeed, I believed this for so long that I wrongly came to think that I perceived it clearly. In fact, it was false; or anyway if it was true it was not thanks to the strength of my perceptions.

But what about when I was considering something simple and straightforward in arithmetic or geometry, for example that two plus three makes five? Didn't I see these things clearly enough to accept them as true? Indeed, the only reason I could find for doubting them was this: Perhaps some God could have made me so as to be deceived even in those matters that seemed most obvious. Whenever I bring to mind my old belief in the supreme power of God, I have to admit that God could, if he wanted to, easily make me go wrong even about things that I think I see perfectly clearly. But when I turn my thought onto the things themselves—the ones I think I perceive clearly—I find them so convincing that I spontaneously exclaim: 'Let him do his best to deceive me! He will never bring it about that I am nothing while I think I am something; or make it true in the future that I have never existed, given that I do now exist; or bring it about that two plus three make more or less than five, or anything else like this in which I see a plain contradiction.' Also, since I have no evidence that there is a deceiving God, and don't even know for sure that there is a God at all, the reason for doubt that depends purely on this supposition of a deceiving God is a very slight and theoretical one. However, I shall want to remove even this slight reason for doubt; so when I get the opportunity I shall examine whether there is a God, and (if there is) whether he can be a deceiver. If I don't settle this, it seems, then I can never be quite certain about anything else.

Exercises

5. In the opening paragraphs of Meditation Three that you have just read, Descartes reviews what at this point in the *Meditations*, he is justified in claiming he knows and what he does not know. Summarize what Descartes claims he knows and does not know.

First, if I am to proceed in an orderly way I should classify my thoughts into definite kinds, and ask which kinds can properly be said to be true or false. Some of my thoughts are, so to speak, images or pictures of things—as when I think of a man, or a chimera, or the sky, or an angel, or God— and strictly speaking these are the only thoughts that should be called 'ideas'. Other thoughts have more to them than that: for example when I will, or am afraid, or affirm, or deny, my thought represents some particular thing but it also includes something more than merely the likeness of that thing. Some thoughts in this category are called volitions or emotions, while others are called judgments.

When ideas are considered solely in themselves and not taken to be connected to anything else, they can't be false; for whether it is ·a goat that I am imagining or ·a chimera, either way it is true that I do imagine it. Nor is there falsity in the will or the emotions; for even if the things I want are wicked or non-existent, it is still true that I want them. All that is left—the only kind of thought where I must watch out for mistakes—are judgments. And the mistake they most commonly involve is to judge that my ideas resemble things outside me. Of course, if I considered the ideas themselves simply as aspects of my thought and not as connected to anything else, they could hardly lead me into any error.

Among my ideas, some seem to be ·innate, some to be ·caused from the outside, and others to have been ·invented by me. As I see it, ·my understanding of what a thing is, what truth is, and what thought is, derives purely from my own nature, ·which means that it is innate·; ·my hearing a noise or seeing the sun or feeling the fire comes from things outside me; and ·sirens, hippogriffs and the like are my own invention. But perhaps really all my ideas are caused from the outside, or all are innate, or all are made up; for I still have not clearly perceived their true origin.

But my main question now concerns the ideas that I take to come from things outside me: why do I think they resemble these things? Nature has apparently taught me to think that they do. But also I know from experience that these ideas don't depend on my will, and thus don't depend simply on me. They often come into my mind without my willing them to: right now, for example, I have a feeling of warmth, whether I want to or not, and that leads me to think that this sensation or idea of heat comes from something other than myself, namely the heat of a fire by which I am sitting. And it seems natural to suppose that what comes to me from that external thing will be like it rather than unlike it.

Now let me see if these arguments are strong enough. When I say 'Nature taught me to think this', all I mean is that ·I have a spontaneous impulse to believe it, not that

·I am shown its truth by some natural light. There is a great difference between those. Things that are revealed by the natural light—for example, that if I am doubting then I exist—are not open to any doubt, because no other faculty that might show them to be false could be as trustworthy as the natural light. My

natural impulses, however, have no such privilege: I have often come to think that they had pushed me the wrong way on moral questions, and I don't see any reason to trust them in other things.

Then again, although these ideas don't depend on my will, it doesn't follow that they must come from things located outside me. Perhaps they come from some faculty of mine other than my will—one that I don't fully know about—which produces these ideas without help from external things; this is, after all, just how I have always thought ideas are produced in me when I am dreaming. Similarly, the natural impulses that I have been talking about, though they seem opposed to my will, come from within me; ·which provides evidence that I can cause things that my will does not cause·.

Finally, even if these ideas do come from things other than myself, it doesn't follow that they must resemble those things. Indeed, I think I have often discovered objects to be very unlike my ideas of them. For example, I find within me two different ideas of the sun: ·one seems to come from the senses—it is a prime example of an idea that I reckon to have an external source—and it makes the sun appear very small; ·the other is based on astronomical reasoning—i.e. it is based on notions that are innate in me (or else it is constructed by me in some other way)—and it shows the sun to be many times larger than the earth. Obviously these ideas cannot both resemble the external sun; and reason convinces me that the idea that seems to have come most directly from the sun itself in fact does not resemble it at all.

These considerations show that it isn't reliable judgment but merely some blind impulse that has led me to think that there exist outside me things that give ideas or images [= 'likenesses'] of themselves through the sense organs or in some other way.

Perhaps, though, there is another way of investigating whether some of the things of which I have ideas really do exist outside me. Considered simply as mental events, my ideas seem to be all on a par: they all appear to come from inside me in the same way. But considered as images representing things other than themselves, it is clear that they differ widely. Undoubtedly, the ·ideas that represent substances amount to something more—they contain within themselves more representative reality—than do the ·ideas that merely represent modes [= 'qualities']. Again, the ·idea that gives me my understanding of a supreme God—eternal, infinite, unchangeable, omniscient, omnipotent and the creator of everything that exists except for himself—certainly has in it more representative reality than the ·ideas that represent merely finite substances.

Now it is obvious by the natural light that the total cause of something must contain at least as much reality as does the effect. For where could the effect get its reality from if not from the cause? And how could the cause give reality to the effect unless it first had that reality itself? Two things follow from this: that something can't arise from nothing, and that what is more perfect—that is, contains in itself more reality—can't arise from what is less perfect. And this is plainly true not only for 'actual' or 'intrinsic' reality (as philosophers call it) but also for the representative reality of ideas—that is, the reality that a idea represents. A stone, for example, can begin to exist only if it is produced by something that contains—either straightforwardly or in some higher form—everything that is to be found in the stone; similarly, heat can't be produced in a previously cold object except by something of at least the same order of perfection as heat, and so on. (·I don't say simply 'except by something that is hot', because that is not necessary. The thing could be caused to be hot by something that doesn't itself straightforwardly contain heat—i.e. that isn't itself hot— but contains heat in a higher form, that is, something of a higher order of perfection than heat. Thus, for example, although God is obviously not himself hot, he can cause something to be hot because he contains heat not straightforwardly but in a higher form·.) But it is also true that the idea of heat or of a stone can be caused in me only by something that contains at least as much reality as I conceive to be in the heat or in the stone. For although this cause does not transfer any of its actual or intrinsic reality to my idea, it still can't be less real. An idea need have no intrinsic reality except what it derives from my

thought, of which it is a mode. But any idea that has representative reality must surely come from a cause that contains at least as much intrinsic reality as there is representative reality in the idea. For if we suppose that an idea contains something that was not in its cause, it must have got this from nothing; yet the kind of reality that is involved in something's being represented in the mind by an idea, though it may not be very perfect, certainly isn't nothing, and so it can't come from nothing.

It might be thought that since the reality that I am considering in my ideas is merely representative, it might be possessed by its cause only representatively and not intrinsically. ·That would mean that the cause is itself an idea, because only ideas have representative reality·. But that would be wrong. Although one idea may perhaps originate from another, there can't be an infinite regress of such ideas; eventually one must come back to an idea whose cause isn't an idea, and this cause must be a kind of archetype [= 'pattern or model, from which copies are made'] con-taining intrinsically all the reality or perfection that the idea contains only representatively. So the natural light makes it clear to me that my ideas are like pictures or images that can easily ·fall short of the perfection of the things from which they are taken, but which can't ·exceed it.

The longer and more carefully I examine all these points, the more vividly and clearly I recognize their truth. But what is my conclusion to be? If I find that

- *some idea of mine has so much representative reality that I am sure the same reality doesn't reside in me, either straightforwardly or in a higher form, and hence that I myself can't be the cause of the idea,*

then, ·because everything must have some cause·, it will necessarily follow that

- *I am not alone in the world: there exists some other thing that is the cause of that idea.*

If no such idea is to be found in me, I shall have no argument to show that anything exists apart from myself; for, despite a most careful and wide-ranging survey, this is the only argument I have so far been able to find.

Exercises

6. Read, again and carefully, the two paragraphs above. What "truth" does Descartes recognize? What conclusion does he reach?

Among my ideas, apart from the one that gives me a representation of myself, which can't present any difficulty in this context, there are ideas that variously represent God, inanimate bodies, angels, animals and finally other men like myself.

As regards my ideas of other men, or animals, or angels, I can easily understand that they could be put together from the ideas I have of myself, of bodies and of God, even if the world contained no men besides me, no animals and no angels.

As to my ideas of bodies, so far as I can see they contain nothing that is so great or excellent that it couldn't have originated in myself. For if I examine them thoroughly, one by one, as I did the idea of the wax yesterday, I realize that the following short list gives everything that I perceive vividly and clearly in them:

- size, or extension in length, breadth and depth;
- shape, which is a function of the boundaries of this extension;
- position, which is a relation between various items possessing shape;
- motion, or change in position.

To these may be added

- substance, duration and number.

But as for all the rest, including light and colours, sounds, smells, tastes, heat and cold and the other qualities that can be known by touch, I think of these in such a confused and obscure way that I don't even know whether they are true or false, that is, whether my ideas of them are ideas of real things or of non-things. Strictly speaking, only judgments can be true or false; but we can also speak of an idea as 'false' in a certain sense—we call it 'materially false'—if it represents a non-thing as a thing. For example, my ideas of heat and cold have so little clarity and distinctness that they don't enable me to know whether

- cold is merely the absence of heat, or
- heat is merely the absence of cold, or
- heat and cold are both real ·positive· qualities, or
- neither heat nor cold is a real ·positive· quality.

If the right answer is that cold is nothing but the absence of heat, the idea that represents it to me as something real and positive deserves to be called 'false'; and the same goes for other ideas of this kind.

Such ideas obviously don't have to be caused by something other than myself. ·If they are false—that is, if they represent non-things—then they are in me only because of a deficiency or lack of perfection in my nature, which is to say that they arise from nothing; I know this by the natural light. ·If on the other hand they are true, there is no reason why they shouldn't arise from myself, since they represent such a slight reality that I can't even distinguish it from a non-thing.

With regard to the vivid and clear elements in my ideas of bodies, it appears that I could have borrowed some of these from my idea of myself, namely substance, duration, number and anything else of this kind. For example, I think that a stone is a substance, or is a thing capable of existing indepen-dently, and I also think that I am a substance.

Admittedly I conceive of myself as a thing that thinks and isn't extended, and of the stone as a thing that is extended and doesn't think, so that the two conceptions differ enormously; but they seem to have the classification 'substance' in common. Again, I perceive that I now exist, and remember that I have existed ·for some time; moreover, I have various thoughts that I can ·count; it is in these ways that I acquire the ideas of ·duration and ·number that I can then transfer to other things. As for all the other elements that make up the ideas of bodies— extension, shape, position and movement—these are not straightforwardly contained in me, since I am nothing but a thinking thing; but since they are merely modes of a substance, and I am a substance, it seems possible that they are contained in me in some higher form. ·That is, I am not myself extended, shaped etc., but because I am a substance I am (so to speak) metaphysically one up on these mere modes, which implies that I can contain within me whatever it takes to cause the ideas of them·.

Exercises

7. Descartes has now distinguished two types of ideas of objects, those that are "vivid and clear" and "those that are "confused and obscure." This distinction is essential to what Descartes later argues about the reality of objects in Meditation 6. Do you understand this distinction? Can you explain it? (Clue: It has to do with a distinction between the primary qualities of objects as they exist in the object and the secondary qualities of objects as are perceived. The classic example here is color. Is an object yellow only when you see it as yellow? What, in an object, makes it seem yellow when you see it? The same holds with sound. Is a note B-flat or does it only sound B-flat?)

So there remains only the idea of God: is there anything in that which couldn't have originated in myself? By the word 'God' I understand a substance that is infinite, eternal, unchangeable, independent, supremely intelligent, supremely powerful, which created myself and anything else that may exist. The more carefully I concentrate on these attributes, the less possible it seems that any of them could have originated from me alone. So this whole discussion implies that God necessarily exists.

It is true that my being a substance explains my having the idea of substance; but it does not explain my having the idea of an infinite substance. That must come from some substance that is itself infinite. I am finite.

Exercises

8. Be clear about what Descartes argues in the paragraph above. The conclusion is "God necessarily exists." Why must God necessarily exist? Descartes considers possible objections to his reasoning in the paragraphs that follow.

It might be thought that ·this is wrong, because· my notion of the ·infinite is arrived at merely by negating the · finite, just as my conceptions of · rest and · darkness are arrived at by negating · movement and · light. ·That would be a mistake, however·. I clearly understand that there is more reality in an infinite substance than in a finite one, and hence that my perception of the infinite, i.e. God, is in some way prior to my perception of the finite, i.e. myself. Whenever I know that I doubt something or want something, I understand that I lack something and am therefore not wholly perfect. How could I grasp this unless I had an idea of a more perfect being that enabled me to recognize my own defects by comparison?

Nor can it be said that this idea of God could be 'materially false', and thus have come from nothing, as may be the case (I noted this a few moments ago) with the ideas of heat and cold. On the contrary, it is utterly vivid and clear, and contains in itself more representative reality than any other idea; ·that is, it stands for

something that is grander, more powerful, more real, than any other idea stands for·; so it is more true—less open to the suspicion of falsehood—than any other idea. This idea of a supremely perfect and infinite being is, I say, true in the highest degree; for although one might imagine that such a being does not exist, it can't be supposed that the idea of such a being represents something unreal in the way that the idea of cold perhaps does. The idea is, moreover, utterly vivid and clear. It does not matter that I don't grasp the infinite, or that there are countless additional attributes of God that I can't grasp and perhaps can't even touch in my thought; for it is in the nature of the infinite not to be grasped by a finite being like myself. It is enough that I understand the infinite, and that I judge that all the attributes that I clearly perceive and know to imply some perfection—and perhaps countless others of which I am ignorant—are present in God either straightforwardly or in some higher form. This is enough to make the idea that I have of God the truest and most vivid and clear of all my ideas.

· Here is a possible objection to that line of thought·. Perhaps I am greater than I myself understand: perhaps all the perfections that I attribute to God are ones that I do have in some potential form, and they merely haven't yet shown themselves in actuality. My knowledge is gradually increasing, and I see no obstacle to its going on increasing to infinity. I might then be able to use this increased ·and even- tually infinite· knowledge to acquire all the other perfections of God. In that case, I already have the potentiality for these perfections—why shouldn't this ·potentiality· be enough to enable me to have caused the idea of them ·that is, to have caused my idea of God·?

But all this [that is, the whole of the preceding paragraph] is impossible ·for three reasons·. ·First, though it is true that my knowledge is increasing, and that I have many poten-tialities that are not yet actual, this is all quite irrelevant to the idea of God, which contains absolutely nothing that is potential. Indeed, this gradual increase in knowledge is itself the surest sign of imperfection, ·because if I am learning more, that shows that there are things I don't know, and that is an imperfection in me·. ·What is more, even if my knowledge increases for ever, it will never actually be infinite, since it will never reach the point where it isn't capable of a further increase; God, on the other hand, I take to be actually infinite, so that nothing can be added to his perfection. ·And, thirdly, strictly speaking potential being is nothing; what it takes to cause the representative being of an idea is actual being.

If one concentrates carefully, all this is quite evident by the natural light. But when I relax my concentration, and my mental vision is blurred by the images of things I perceive by the senses, I lose sight of the reasons why my idea of more perfect being has to come from a being that really is more perfect. So, I want to push on with my enquiry, now asking a new question: If the more perfect being didn't exist, could I exist? ·My hope is that the answer to this will yield a new proof of the existence of a perfect being—a proof that it will be easier for me to keep in mind even when I relax my concentration·.

Exercises

9. Here Descartes asks a new question, if a perfect being does not exist, what could be the cause of his (remember, at this point he is merely a cogito) existence?

Well, if God didn't exist, from what would I derive my existence? It would have to come from myself, or from

my parents, or from some other beings less perfect than God (a being more perfect than God, or even one as perfect, is unthinkable).

If I had derived my existence from myself, I would not now doubt or want or lack anything at all; for I would have given myself all the perfections of which I have any idea. So I would be God. I mustn't suppose that the items I lack would be harder to get than the ones I now have. On the contrary, it would have been far more difficult for me—a thinking thing or substance—to emerge out of nothing than merely to acquire knowledge of the many things I'm ignorant about, because that would merely be giving the substance certain accidents. If I had derived my existence from myself—the greater achievement—I certainly wouldn't have denied myself the knowledge in question, which is something much easier to acquire, or indeed any of the attributes that I perceive to be contained in the idea of God; for none of them seem any harder to achieve. . . .

Here is a thought that might seem to undercut that argument. Perhaps I have always existed as I do now. Then wouldn't it follow that there need be no cause for my existence? No, it does not follow. For a life-span can be divided into countless parts, each completely independent of the others, so that from my existing at one time it doesn't follow that I exist at later times, unless some cause keeps me in existence—one might say that it creates me afresh at each moment. Anyone who thinks hard about the nature of time will understand that what it takes to ·bring a thing into existence is also needed to ·keep it in existence at each moment of its duration. So there's no real distinction between · preservation and ·creation—only a conceptual one—and this is something that the natural light makes evident.

So I have to ask myself whether I have the power to bring it about that I, who now exist, will still exist a minute from now. For since I am nothing but a thinking thing—or anyway that is the only part of me that I am now concerned with—if I had such a power I would undoubtedly be aware of it. But I experience no such power, and this shows me quite clearly that I depend ·for my continued existence· on some being other than myself.

Perhaps this being is not God, though. Perhaps I was produced by causes less perfect than God, such as my parents. No; for as I have said before, it is quite clear that there must be at least as much reality or perfection in the cause as in the effect. And therefore, given that I am a thinking thing and have within me some idea of God, the cause of me—whatever it is—must itself be a thinking thing and must have the idea of all the perfections that I attribute to God. What is the cause of this cause of me? If it is the cause of its own existence, then it is God; for if it has the power of existing through its own strength, then undoubtedly it also has the power of actually possessing all the perfections of which it has an idea—that is, all the perfections that I conceive to be in God. If on the other hand it gets its existence from another cause, then the question arises all over again regarding this further cause: Does it get its existence from itself or from another cause? Eventually we must reach the ultimate cause, and this will be God.

It is clear enough that this sequence of causes of causes can't run back to infinity, especially since I am dealing with the cause that not only produced me in the past but also preserves me at the present moment.

One might think this:

Several partial causes contributed to my creation; I received the idea of one of the perfections that I attribute to God from one cause, and the idea of another from another. Each perfection is to be found somewhere in the universe, but no one thing has them all.

That can't be right, because God's simplicity—that is, the unity or inseparability of all his attributes—is one of the most important of the perfections that I understand him to have. The idea of his perfections as united in a single substance couldn't have been placed in me by any cause that didn't also provide me with the ideas

of the perfections themselves; for no cause could have made me understand that the perfections are united without at the same time showing me what they are.

Lastly, as regards my parents, even if everything I have ever believed about them is true, it is certainly not they who keep me in existence. Insofar as I am a thinking thing, indeed, they did not even make me; they merely brought about an arrangement of matter that I have always regarded as containing me (that is, containing my mind, for that is all I now take myself to be). So my parents can't be the cause-of-me that I am enquiring about.

·Given the failure of every other candidacy for the role of cause of me and of my idea of a most perfect being, I infer that the only successful candidacy is God's·. Thus, I conclude that the mere fact that I exist and have within me an idea of a most perfect being—that is, God—provides a clear proof that God does indeed exist.

Exercises

10. Note Descartes' conclusion in the paragraph above. What is it?

It remains for me only to ask how I received this idea from God. I didn't get it from the senses: it has never come to me unexpectedly, as do most of the ideas that occur when I seem to see and touch and hear things. And it's not something that I invented, either; for clearly I can't take anything away from it or to add anything to it. ·When an idea is sheerly invented, the inventor is free to fiddle with it—add a bit here, subtract a bit there—whereas my idea of God is a natural unit that doesn't invite or even permit such interference·. The only remaining alternative is that my idea of God is innate in me, just as the idea of myself is innate in me.

It is no surprise that God in creating me should have placed this idea in me, to serve as a mark of the craftsman stamped on his work. The mark need not be anything distinct from the work itself. But the mere fact that God created me makes it very believable that I am somehow made in his image and likeness, and that I perceive that likeness in the same way that I perceive myself. That is, when I turn my mind's eye upon myself, I understand that I am a thing that · is incomplete and ·dependent on something else, and that · aspires without limit to ever greater and better things; but I also understand at the same time that he on whom I depend has within him all those greater things—not just indefinitely but infinitely, not just potentially but actually—and hence that he is God. The core of the argument is this: I couldn't exist with the nature that I have—that is, containing within me the idea of God—if God didn't really exist. By 'God' I mean the very being the idea of whom is within me—the one that has no defects and has all those perfections that I can't grasp but can somehow touch with my thought. This shows clearly that it is not possible for him to be a deceiver, since the natural light makes it clear that all fraud and deception depend on some defect.

Exercises

11. Here is the final conclusion of Meditation 3. What is it and what is Descartes' argument for it?

But before examining this point more carefully and investigating other truths that may be derived from it, I want to pause here and spend some time contemplating God; to reflect on his attributes and to gaze with wonder and adoration on the beauty of this immense light, so far as the eye of my darkened intellect can bear it. For just as we believe through faith that the supreme happiness of ·the next life consists in contemplating the divine majesty, so experience tells us that this same contemplation, though much less perfect, provides the greatest joy we can have in · this life.

Exercises

12. Do you have any questions or additional comments?

D. Meditation Five: God and the foundation of knowledge, the ontological argument

Meditation Five covers much of the same ground as Meditation Three. Descartes constructs an argument for the existence of God. Descartes constructs this argument to prove that God exists as a perfect being. A perfect being cannot be a deceiver. Therefore, God cannot be a deceiver. If god is not a deceiver, then that which we know by the natural light, that which we can comprehend clearly and distinctly, must be as we comprehend it to be.

While this new attempt to prove that god exists may seem redundant, the Meditation Five argument for God's existence plays a somewhat different role in the overall structure of the Meditations than Meditation Three.

1. A glance back at Meditation Four

Meditation Five comes after Meditation Four, which is titled, "Concerning the True and the False." Although I am not requiring you to read Meditation Four, it does answer an important question that the Meditation Three argument raises. This question is, "Why, if God is no deceiver, are not all my beliefs certain?" In other words, "Why did the perfect God create a being [the cogito, the thinking thing] that is, seemingly, imperfect in its understanding?"

In Meditation Four, Descartes argues that we are not imperfect in our understanding. We make mistakes *in our judgements*, not in our understanding. This is because, in addition to giving us the rational capacity to discern what ideas are clear and distinct, God also gives us the freedom to judge as we will. Thus, we can, and often do, make a judgement about what is true when we do not have a vivid and distinct idea of what we are passing judgement on. This, according to Descartes, is the source of error in judgement. In exercising our god given freedom of will, we pass judgement on ideas that are not vivid and distinct.

Descartes does acknowledge that God could have chosen to create him so as to never make false judgement. However, Descartes then states that while he might be more perfect than he is he had been created so as never to make false judgments, there "may somehow be a greater perfection in the universe as a whole that some of it parts are not immune to error, while others are, than if all of them were exactly alike." In other words, we as individuals have less perfection than we might have so that the universe as a whole might be more perfect.

Descartes then councils us to follow the following rule: "abstain from making judgements whenever the truth of a given matter is not apparent." If we follow this rule, we can be free of the error hasty judgement leads us to.

Because Descartes repeatedly invokes the notion of that which is "vivid and distinct" this designation is worthy of some remark. First, recall Bennett's note on his translation at the start of Meditation 3. While he translates Descartes' Latin and French as "vivid and clear" most other translation use "clear and distinct." For our purposes these two phrases are interchangeable. Second, there is the question of the relation of

our ability to discern what is clear and distinct in accordance with Descartes' understanding of what he calls the "natural light." In his reply to an objection made by the English philosopher Thomas Hobbes in the "Objections and Replies" that were published with the *Meditations*, Descartes writes "As everyone knows, a 'light in the intellect' means transparent clarity of cognition." (Replies 3)[1] This seems to make the natural light the same as the notion of clarity and, perhaps, distinctness. However, in his *Meditations*, Descartes never defines what it means for a concept to be clear and distinct. Elsewhere, in his *Principles of Philosophy*, Descartes writes, "I call a perception "clear" when it is present and accessible to the attentive mind … I call a perception "distinct" if, as well as being clear, it is so sharply separated from all other perceptions that it contains within itself only what is clear." (Prin. 1:45)[2]

In this and other passages, Descartes seems to be saying that a perception (and Descartes uses "perception" in a way closer to our notion of **idea** than our notion of a perception) is clear if we can comprehend precisely what the perception is and distinct if we can clearly separate it from all other perceptions. For Descartes, if there is no deceiver, whatever we perceive clearly and distinctly must be as we perceive it to be.

Thirdly, many philosophical commentators on Descartes have claimed that there is fundamental flaw in his reasoning. Throughout both Meditation 3 and 5 Descartes uses the fact that he perceives something by "the natural light" [of reason] as justification for its truth. He does this prior to proving that he is not being deceived and as a means of demonstrating that he is not being deceived. However, might Descartes not be deceived about the illumination given by the natural light? Is he justified in using it to reason that God exists and is no deceiver if, indeed, he is so deceived? This criticism of Descartes, is now called the Cartesian Circle. It was first noted by his contemporary Marin Marsenne in his "Second Set Of Objections" to Descartes' *Meditations*.

2. Meditation Five

With Meditation Four in the background, in Meditation Five Descartes initially turns to his thoughts about things that seem to exist outside of him. This, interestingly, turns Descartes to thinking about triangles. This is because, unlike the objects of our senses, we can have clear and distinct knowledge of the essential properties of triangles. Geometry shows us that triangles are completely knowable through reason alone. Based on this Descartes then asks whether this can also lead him to a proof of god's existence. His first thought is, "yes, this must be so because existence is part of the essence of god in the same way that three-sidedness is part of the essence of a triangle." Descartes initially questions whether this must be so. However, he then states, "*Just as it is self-contradictory to think of highlands in a world where there are no lowlands, so it is self-contradictory to think of God as not existing—that is, to think of a supremely perfect being as lacking a perfection, namely the perfection of existence.*"[3]

Descartes then discusses why this is not immediately evident to everyone. Descartes responds to this by stating, "*if my thoughts were not hemmed in and pushed around by images of things perceived by the senses, I would acknowledge God sooner and more easily than anything else*."[4] Thus, with this as with other

1. Descartes, Rene, Meditations on First Philosophy, in the version presented at www.earlymoderntexts.com
2. The Philosophical Writings of Descartes, Cottingham, John, and Robert Stoothoff, and Dugald Murdoch. (eds.) 1984. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 1:207f
3. Descartes, Rene, Meditations on First Philosophy, in the version presented at www.earlymoderntexts.com
4. Ibid

ideas, Descartes argues that the problem is with our tendency to not make the concerted effort to think clearly and distinctly about the question of god's nature and existence.

Descartes' argument in Meditation Five for the existence of God is a version of what is called an "ontological argument." *Ontic* refers to *being*. (Ontology is the branch of metaphysics investigating what must be for there to be anything at all.) Ontological arguments for the existence of god are arguments that rest on the concept of god as opposed to any kind of evidence there may be for God's existence. In this way, they are essentially different from cosmological arguments for god's existence. Ontological arguments have a long history in philosophy of religion. In this history, the version of the ontological argument presented by a philosopher-theologian Bishop Anselm of Canterbury (1033/4–1109) is most prominent.

Here is a Crash Course Philosophy video on Anselm's version of the ontological argument.

As the Crash Course video indicates, Anselm's argument has been widely criticized. After you have read Meditation 5, ask yourself whether the same objections that apply to Anslem's version of the ontological argument apply to Descartes' version.

Descartes provides us with both cosmological and ontological arguments for God's existence. For Descartes, these arguments are not just about whether god exists. They are also about whether we can have knowledge that goes beyond the very limited knowledge of the cogito. For Descartes, this depends on there being no demon deceiver.

"Thus, I see plainly that the certainty and truth of all knowledge depends strictly on my awareness of the true God. So much so that until I became aware of him I couldn't perfectly know anything. Now I can achieve full and certain knowledge of countless matters, both concerning God himself and other things whose nature is intellectual, and also concerning the whole of the corporeal nature that is the subject-matter of pure mathematics."

Read "Meditation Five"

(For this Meditation, try to read it through and follow Descartes' argument. If you do not understand a part of it, make a note of it, this is something that can be brought up in and worked out in class.)

3. Fifth Meditation: The essence of material things, and the existence of God considered a second time

There are many enquiries still to be made about God's attributes, and many about my own nature (that is, the nature of my mind). I may take these up at some time; but right now I have a more pressing task. Now that I have seen how to reach the truth—what to do and what to avoid—I must try to escape from the doubts that beset me a few days ago, and see whether anything can be known for certain about material objects.

Before enquiring into whether there are any such things, I should consider the ideas of them in my thought, in order to see which of those ideas are distinct and which confused.

I distinctly imagine quantity—that is, the length, breadth and depth of the quantity, or rather of the thing that is quantified. I also enumerate the thing's parts, to which I attribute various sizes, shapes, positions and movements; and to the movements I attribute various durations, ·that is, I say how long each movement lasts·.

Size, shape, position and so on are well known and transparent to me as general kinds of phenomenon, but there are also countless particular facts involving them that I perceive when I attend to them. The truths about all these matters are so open to me, and so much in harmony with my nature, that when I first discover any of them it feels less like ·learning something new than like ·remembering something I had known before, or ·noticing for the first time something that was already in my mind without my having turned my mental gaze onto it.

The most important point is that I find in myself countless ideas of things that can't be called nothing, even if they don't exist anywhere outside me. For although I am free to think of these ideas or not, as I choose, I didn't invent them: they have their own true and immutable natures, ·which are not under my control·. Even if there are not and never were any triangles outside my thought, still, when I imagine a triangle ·I am constrained in how I do this, because· there is a determinate nature or essence or form of triangle that is eternal, unchanging, and independent of my mind. Consider the things that I can prove about the triangle—that its three angles equal two right angles, that its longest side is opposite its greatest angle, and so on. I now clearly recognize these properties of the triangle, whether I want to or not, even if I didn't give them a thought when the triangle first came into my mind. So they can't have been invented by me.

It does not help to point out that I have sometimes seen triangular bodies, so that the idea of the triangle might have come to me from them through my sense organs. I can prove truths about the properties not only of triangles but of countless other shapes that I know I have never encountered through the senses. These properties must be something, not pure nothing: whatever is true is something; and these properties are true because I am clearly aware of them. (I have already proved that everything of which I am clearly aware is true; and even if I hadn't proved it, my mind is so constituted that I have to assent to these ·geometrical· propositions as long as I perceive them.) I remember, too, that even back in the times when the objects of the senses held my attention, I regarded the clearly apprehended propositions of pure mathematics—including arithmetic and geometry—as the most certain of all.

·The preceding two paragraphs lead to this conclusion·: The mere fact that I find in my thought an idea of something x, and vividly and clearly perceive x to have a certain property, it follows that x really does have that property. Can I not turn this to account in a second argument to prove the existence of God? The idea of God (that is, of a supremely perfect being) is certainly one that I find within me, just as I find the ideas of shapes and numbers; and I understand ·from this idea· that it belongs to God's nature that he always exists. This understanding is just as vivid and clear as what is involved in ·mathematical· proofs of the properties of shapes and numbers. So even if I have sometimes gone wrong in my meditations in these past days, I ought still to regard the existence of God as being at least as certain as I have taken the truths of mathematics to be.

At first sight, this looks like a trick. Where things other than God are involved, I have been accustomed to distinguish a thing's existence from its essence. ·The question 'What is the essence of triangles (or flames or sparrows)?' asks what it takes for something to qualify as a triangle (or flame or sparrow). Answering this still leaves open the existence question, which asks whether there are any triangles (or flames or sparrows)·. I can easily believe that in the case of God, also, existence can be separated from essence, ·letting us answer the ·essence question about God while leaving the · existence question open·, so that God can be thought of as not existing. But on more careful reflection it becomes quite evident that, just as having-internal-angles-equal-to-180° can't be separated from the idea ·or essence· of a triangle, and as the idea of highlands can't be separated from the idea of lowlands, so existence can't be separated from the essence of God. Just as it is self-contradictory to think of highlands in a world where there are no lowlands, so it is self-contradictory to think of God as not existing—that is, to think of a supremely perfect being as lacking a perfection, namely the perfection of existence.

[What Descartes wrote is usually translated as 'mountains in a world where there are no valleys', but that is obviously not self-contradictory. The Latin provides no escape from this, but Descartes may have been thinking in French, in which vallée can mean 'valley' in our sense but can be used to refer to foothills, the lower slopes of a mountain, or the plain immediately surrounding the mountain. So 'highlands'/'lowlands' has been adopted as a compromise: compact and fairly close to what he presumably meant.]

·Here is a possible objection to the preceding two paragraphs·:

I can't think of God except as existing, just as I can't think of a river without banks. From the latter fact, though, it certainly doesn't follow that there are any rivers in the world; so why should it follow from the former fact that God exists? How things are in reality is not settled by my thought; and just as I can imagine a winged horse even though no horse has wings, so I can attach existence to God in my thought even if no God exists.

This involves false reasoning. From the fact that I can't think of a river without banks, it does not follow that a river with banks exists anywhere, but simply that river and banks— whether or not there are any in reality—are inseparable. On the other hand, from the fact that I can't think of God except as existing it follows that God and existence are inseparable, which is to say that God really exists. My thought doesn't make it so; it doesn't create necessities. The influence runs the opposite way: the necessity of the thing constrains how I can think, depriving me of the freedom to think of God without existence (that is, a supremely perfect being without a supreme perfection), like my freedom to imagine a horse with or without wings.

Here is a ·further· possible objection to this line of thought:

Admittedly, once I have supposed that ·all perfections belong to God, I must suppose that he exists, because existence is one of the perfections. But what entitles me to suppose God to have all perfections? Similarly, if I suppose that ·all quadrilaterals can be inscribed in a circle, I have to conclude that a rhombus can be inscribed in a circle; but that is plainly false, which shows that the original supposition was wrong.

I agree that I don't have to think about God at all; but whenever I do choose to think of him, bringing the idea of the first and supreme being out of my mind's store, I must attribute all perfections to him, even if I don't attend to them individually straight away. This necessity ·in my thought· guarantees that, when I later realize that existence is a perfection, I am right to conclude then that the first and supreme being exists. Similarly, I don't ever have to imagine a triangle; but whenever I do wish to consider a figure with straight sides and three angles, I must attribute to it proper- ties from which it follows that its three angles equal no more than 180°, even if I don't notice this at the time. When on the other hand I examine what figures can be inscribed in a circle, I am not compelled to think that this class includes all quadrilaterals. Indeed, I cannot—while thinking vividly and clearly—even pretend that all quadrilaterals can be inscribed in a circle. This kind of false pretence is vastly different from the true ideas that are innate in me, of which the first and chief is the idea of God. This idea isn't a fiction, a creature of my thought, but rather an image of a true and unchanging nature; and I have several indications that this is so. ·God is the only thing I can think of whose existence necessarily belongs to its essence. ·I can't make sense of there being two or more Gods of this kind; and after supposing that one God exists, I plainly see that it is necessary that he has existed from eternity and will stay in existence for eternity. · I perceive many other attributes of God, none of which I can remove or alter.

Whatever method of proof I use, though, I am always brought back to the fact that nothing completely convinces me except what I vividly and clearly perceive. Some things that I vividly and clearly perceive are obvious to everyone; others can be learned only through more careful investigation, but once they are

discovered they are judged to be just as certain as the obvious ones. (Compare these two truths about right-angled triangles: 'The square on the hypotenuse equals the sum of the squares on the other two sides' and 'The hypotenuse is opposite the largest angle'. The former is less obvious than the latter; but once one has seen it, one believes it just as strongly.) ·Truths about God are not in the immediately obvious class, but they ought to be·. If I were not swamped by preconceived opinions, and if my thoughts were not hemmed in and pushed around by images of things perceived by the senses, I would acknowledge God sooner and more easily than anything else. The supreme being exists; God, the only being whose essence includes existence, exists; what is more self-evident than that?

Although I came to see this only through careful thought, I am now just as certain of it as I am of anything at all. Not only that, but I see that all other certainties depend on this one, so that without it I can't know anything for sure. ·The next two paragraphs explain why this is so·.

While I am perceiving something vividly and clearly, I can't help believing it to be true. That is a fact about my nature. Here is another: I can't fix my mind's eye continually on the same thing, so as to keep perceiving it clearly; so that sometimes the arguments that led me to a certain conclusion slip out of my focus of attention, though I remember the conclusion itself. That threatens me with the following state of affairs, from which I am protected only by being aware of the existence of God:

In a case where I am not attending to the arguments that led me to a conclusion, my confidence in the conclusion might be undermined by arguments going the other way. When I think hard about triangles, for instance, it seems quite obvious to me—steeped as I am in the principles of geometry—that a triangle's three angles are equal to 180°; and while I am attend-ing to the proof of this I can't help believing it. But as soon as I turn my mind's eye away from the proof, then in spite of still remembering that I perceived it very clearly ·but without now getting it clear in my mind again·, I can easily doubt its truth. So nothing is ever finally established and settled—I can have no true and certain knowledge, but only shifting and changeable opinions. For I can convince myself that I am naturally liable to go wrong sometimes in matters that I think I perceive as evidently as can be. This seems even more likely when I remember that I have often regarded as certainly true some propositions that other arguments have later led me to think false.

That is what my situation would be if I were not aware of the existence of God.

But now I have seen that God exists and have understood that everything else depends on him and that he is not a deceiver; from which I have inferred that everything that I vividly and clearly perceive must be true. So even when I am no longer attending to the arguments that led me to accept this (·i.e. the proposition about triangles·), as long as I remember that I vividly and clearly perceived it no counter-arguments can make me doubt it. It is something that I know for certain ·and in an unshakable way· to be true. That applies not only to this one proposition but to anything that I remember ever having proved in geometry and the like. Why should I call these matters into doubt? ·Because I am so built as to be prone to frequent error? No: I now know that when I have something in mind in a transparently clear way I cannot be in error about it. ·Because I have in the past regarded as certainly true many things that I afterwards recognized to be false? No: the things that I later came to doubt had not been vividly and clearly perceived in the first place: I had come to accept them for reasons that I later found to be unreliable, because I hadn't yet discovered this rule for establishing the truth. ·Because I may be dreaming, so that my present thoughts have as little truth as those of a person who is asleep? I put this objection to myself a while ago. It doesn't change anything, because if something is evident to my intellect, even when I am dreaming, then it is true.

Thus I see plainly that the certainty and truth of all knowledge depends strictly on my awareness of the true God. So much so that until I became aware of him I couldn't perfectly know anything. Now I can achieve full and certain knowledge of countless matters, both concerning God himself and other things whose nature

is intellectual, and also concerning the whole of the corporeal nature that is the subject-matter of pure mathematics.

Exercises

1. Now, having read Meditation 5:

a. What are Descartes' key conclusions?

b. What reasons does he give for these conclusions? (In other words, summarize his arguments.)

c. Is his version of the Ontological Argument subject to the same criticisms as is Anselms?

d. Do you accept his claim that he has argued beyond the possibility of doubt that God exists and is no deceiver? Explain why you have the view you do.

2. Do you have any questions or additional comments?

E. Meditation Six: Metaphysical Realism and Cartesian Dualism

1. Introduction to Meditation Six

Meditation Six is the culminating Meditation. In it he brings back the external world that was cast in the shadow of doubt in meditation Five. Descartes does this by once again considering his ideas of things that seem to exist outside of his mind. In Meditation Six he makes another distinction between things that exist as objects of pure understanding and things that he apprehends through mental images. The former, objects of pure understanding, such as the cogito, geometrical entities such as chiliagon, and God as understood ontologically, can be known clearly and distinctly as they are. Mental images are different in that they cannot be fully comprehended by the understanding alone. Knowledge of tree or a cloud, for example, requires a different sort of inquiry than knowledge of a chiliagon. Descartes reasons from this that the power of having mental images is fundamentally different from the power of pure understanding.

He then goes on to reason as to the origin of this difference and considers the possibility that, as we are prone to conjecture, physical objects exist. He then reviews the reasons why he doubted whether physical objects exist. After reviewing these reasons, he states, "But now, when I am beginning to know myself and my maker better, although I don't think I should recklessly accept everything I seem to have acquired from the senses, neither do I think it should all be called into doubt."

After this he considers the reasons why he might conclude that physical objects exist (you should read this section carefully and be ready to give these reasons!) he comes to his conclusion. "So, if the ideas were transmitted from a source other than corporeal things, God would be a deceiver; and he is not. So, bodies exist."

After this, he discusses the nature of his god given capacities for understanding external objects. He argues, again, that given the fact that we cannot trust what our senses seem to tell us,[1] we need to use our capacity to reason about what experience to understand experience. Experience, on its own, is profoundly misleading.

Descartes proceeds to acknowledge that his body is like other external objects. It exists as a thing that occupies space and is subject to different conditions of being than abstract objects such as chiliagon. External objects are dividable and occupy space. Mind, on the other hand, has powers but no parts. On this basis, Descartes concludes that mind and body are fundamentally different kinds of things.

This conclusion, that mind and body are fundamentally different kinds of things, is known as "Cartesian Dualism." Fundamental kinds of things are called "substances." Cartesian Dualism argues that there are two substances, mind and body. It is the mind that reasons through Descartes' *Meditations on First Philosophy*. It is the body that sits by the fire in Descartes' room. Bodies are material things. For Descartes, material things are things that occupy space. Other organisms are, for Descartes, just bodies. They are not bodies with minds. Human beings are unique because they have both bodies and mind. Material things are subject

1. "So, although a star has no more effect on my eye than a candle's flame, my thinking of the star as no bigger than the flame does not come from any positive ·'natural'· inclination to believe this; it's just a habit of thought that I have had ever since childhood, with no rational basis for it."

to causal determination. Minds have free will. Minds can reason and know. Bodies just react to forces that impinge on them.

This distinction between mind and body subsequently becomes a highly debated issue among philosophers. Typically, there are three positions possible. (1) Metaphysical materialism. This is the view that only matter exists and that so-called minds are just a form of matter. (2) Metaphysical idealism. This is the view that only minds or ideas exist and that what seems to be matter is just a certain kind of idea. (3) Dualism. Descartes' dualism of mind and body (matter) is the paradigm of this.

We will return to these topics later in the book.

For now, with the distinction between mind and body Descartes concludes his *Meditations* and in doing so, he believes, lays a foundation for both philosophy and for science.

Read "Meditation Six".

2. Sixth Meditation: The existence of material things, and the real distinction between mind and body

The remaining task is to consider whether material things exist. Insofar as they are the subject-matter of pure mathematics, I perceive [here = 'conceive'] them vividly and clearly; so I at least know that they could exist, because anything that I perceive in that way could be created by God. (The only rea- son I have ever accepted for thinking that ·something could not be made by him is that there would be a contradiction in my perceiving ·it distinctly.) My faculty of imagination, which I am aware of using when I turn my mind to material things, also suggests that they really exist. For when I think harder about what imagination is, it seems to be simply an application of ·the faculty of knowing to ·a body that is intimately present to it—and that has to be a body that exists.

To make this clear, I will first examine how ·imagination differs from ·pure understanding. When I imagine a triangle, for example, I don't merely ·understand that it is a three- sided figure, but I also ·see the three lines with my mind's eye as if they were present to me; that is what imagining is. But if I think of a chiliagon [= 'thousand-sided figure', pronounced kill-ee-a-gon], although I ·understand quite well that it is a figure with a thousand sides, I don't ·imagine the thousand sides or see them as if they were present to me. When I think of a body, I usually form some kind of image; so in thinking of a chiliagon I may construct in my mind—·strictly speaking, in my imagination·—a confused representation of some figure. But obviously it won't be a chiliagon, for it is the very same image that I would form if I were thinking of, say, a figure with ten thousand sides. So it wouldn't help me to recognize the properties that distinguish a chiliagon from other many-sided figures. In the case of a pentagon, the situation is different. I can of course understand this figure without the help of the imagination (just as I can understand a chiliagon); but I can also imagine a pentagon, by applying my mind's eye to its five sides and the area they enclose. This imagining, I find, takes more mental effort than understanding does; and that is enough to show clearly that imagination is different from pure understanding.

Exercises

1. Descartes here discusses the difference between "imagination" and "pure understanding," what is this difference? How does the example of the "chiliagon" help to illustrate this difference? How does this tie into the claim he makes at the start of the next paragraph that "Being able to imagine isn't essential to me, as being able to understand is"?

Being able to imagine isn't essential to me, as being able to understand is; for even if I had no power of imagination I would still be the same individual that I am. This seems to imply that my power of imagining depends on something other than myself; and I can easily understand that ·if there is such a thing as my body—that is·, if my mind is joined to a certain body in such a way that it can contemplate that body whenever it wants to—then it might be this very body that enables me to imagine corporeal things. So it may be that imagining differs from pure understanding purely like this: · when the mind understands, it somehow turns in on itself and inspects one of its own ideas; but ·when it imagines, it turns away from itself and looks at something in the body (something that conforms to an idea—either one understood by the mind or one perceived by the senses). I can, I repeat, easily see that this might be how imagination comes about if the body exists; and since I can think of no other equally good way of explaining what imagination is, I can conjecture that the body exists. But this is only a probability. Even after all my careful enquiry I still can't see how, on the basis of the idea of corporeal nature that I find in my imagination, to prove for sure that some body exists.

As well as the corporeal nature that is the subject-matter of pure mathematics, I am also accustomed to imagining colours, sounds, tastes, pain and so on—though not so distinctly. Now, I perceive these much better by means of the senses, which is how (helped by memory) they appear to have reached the imagination. So in order to deal with them more fully, I must attend to the senses—that is, to the kind of thinking [here = 'mental activity'] that I call 'sensory perception'. I want to know whether the things that are perceived through the senses provide me with any sure argument for the existence of bodies.

To begin with, I will (1) go back over everything that I originally took to be perceived by the senses and reckoned to be true; and I will go over my reasons for thinking this. Next, I will (2) set out my reasons for later doubting these things. Finally, I will (3) consider what I should now believe about them.

(1) First of all, then, I perceived by my senses that I had a head, hands, feet and other limbs making up the body that I regarded as part of myself, or perhaps even as my whole self. I also perceived by my senses that this body was situated among many other bodies that could harm or help it; and I detected the favourable effects by a sensation of pleasure and the unfavourable ones by pain. As well as pain and pleasure, I also had sensations of hunger, thirst, and other such appetites, and also of bodily states tending towards cheerfulness, sadness, anger and similar emotions. Outside myself, besides the extension, shapes and movements of bodies, I also had sensations of their hardness and heat, and of the other qualities that can be known by touch. In addition, I had sensations of light, colours, smells, tastes and sounds, and differences amongst these enabled me to sort out the sky, the earth, the seas and other bodies from one another. All I was immediately aware of in each case were my ideas, but it was reasonable for me to think that what I was perceiving through the senses were external bodies that caused the ideas. For I found that these ideas came to me quite without my consent: I couldn't have that kind of idea of any object, even if I wanted to, if the object was not present to my sense organs; and I couldn't avoid having the idea when the object was present. Also, since the ideas that came through the senses were much more lively and vivid and sharp than ·ones that I formed voluntarily when thinking about things, and than ·ones that I found

impressed on my memory, it seemed impossible that sensory ideas were coming from within me; so I had to conclude that they came from external things. My only way of knowing about these things was through the ideas themselves, so it was bound to occur to me that the things might resemble the ideas. In addition, I remembered that I had the use of my senses before I ever had the use of reason; and I saw that the ideas that I formed were, for the most part, made up of elements of sensory ideas. This convinced me that I had nothing at all in my intellect that I had not previously had in sensation. As for the body that by some special right I called 'mine': I had reason to think that it belonged to me in a way that no other body did. ·There were three reasons for this·. •I could never be separated from it, as I could from other bodies; •I felt all my appetites and emotions in it and on account of it; and •I was aware of pain and pleasurable ticklings in parts of this body but not in any other body. But why should that curious sensation of pain give rise to a particular distress of mind; and why should a certain kind of delight follow on a tickling sensation? Again, why should that curious tugging in the stomach that I call 'hunger' tell me that I should eat, or a dryness of the throat tell me to drink, and so on? I couldn't explain any of this, except to say that nature taught me so. For there is no connection (or none that I understand) between the tugging sensation and the decision to eat, or between the sensation of something causing pain and the mental distress that arises from it. It seems that nature taught me to make these judgments about objects of the senses, for I was making them before I had any arguments to support them.

(2) Later on, however, my experiences gradually under- mined all my faith in the senses. A tower that had looked round from a distance appeared square from close up; an enormous statue standing on a high column didn't look large from the ground. In countless such cases I found that the judgments of the external senses were mistaken, and the same was true of the internal senses. What can be more internal than pain? Yet I heard that an amputee might occasionally seem to feel pain in the missing limb. So even in my own case, I had to conclude, it was not quite certain that a particular limb was hurting, even if I felt pain in it. To these reasons for doubting, I recently added two very general ones. •The first was that every sensory experience I ever thought I was having while awake I can also think of myself as having while asleep; and since I don't believe that what I seem to perceive in sleep comes from things outside me, I didn't see why I should be any more inclined to believe this of what I think I perceive while awake. •The second reason for doubt was that for all I knew to the contrary I might be so constituted that I am liable to error even in matters that seem to me most true. (I couldn't rule this out, because I did not know—or at least was pretending not to know—who made me.) And it was easy to refute the reasons for my earlier confidence about the truth of what I perceived by the senses. Since I seemed to be naturally drawn towards many things that reason told me to avoid, I reckoned that I should not place much confidence in what I was taught by nature. Also, I decided, the mere fact that the perceptions of the senses didn't depend on my will was not enough to show that they came from outside me; for they might have been produced by some faculty of mine that I didn't yet know.

(3) But now, when I am beginning to know myself and my maker better, although I don't think I should recklessly accept everything I seem to have acquired from the senses, neither do I think it should all be called into doubt.

Exercises

2. In 1-3 above Descartes discusses (1) the reasons he believed material things ("bodies") existed, (2) the reasons why his method for finding knowledge (certain or necessary truths) led him to

doubt the veracity of his beliefs, and (3) whether the progress he has made up to this point in the Meditations still lead him to doubt such beliefs. Briefly summarize these paragraphs and indicate whether and why you agree or disagree with Descartes' reasoning in these paragraphs.

First, I know that if I have a vivid and clear thought of something, God could have created it in a way that exactly corresponds to my thought. So the fact that I can vividly and clearly think of one thing apart from another assures me that the two things are distinct from one another—·that is, that they are two·—since they can be separated by God. Never mind how they could be separated; that does not affect the judgment that they are distinct. ·So my mind is a distinct thing from my body. Furthermore, my mind is me, for the following reason·. I know that I exist and that nothing else belongs to my nature or essence except that I am a thinking thing; from this it follows that my essence consists solely in my being a thinking thing, even though there may be a body that is very closely joined to me. I have a vivid and clear idea of ·myself as something that thinks and isn't extended, and one of ·body as something that is extended and does not think. So it is certain that ·I am really distinct from ·my body and can exist without it.

Besides this, I find that I am capable of certain special kinds of thinking [= 'mental activity'], namely imagination and sensory perception. Now, I can vividly and clearly under- stand ·myself as a whole without ·these faculties; but I can't understand ·them without ·me, that is, without an intellectual substance for them to belong to. A faculty or ability essentially involves acts, so it involves some thing that acts; so I see that ·I differ from ·my faculties as ·a thing differs from ·its properties. Of course there are other faculties—such as those of moving around, changing shape, and so on—which also need a substance to belong to; but it must be a bodily or extended substance and not a thinking one, because a vivid and clear conception of those faculties includes extension but not thought. Now, I have a passive faculty of sensory perception, that is, an ability to receive and recognize ideas of perceptible objects; but I would have no use for this unless something—myself or something else—had an active faculty for producing those ideas in the first place. But this faculty can't be in me, since clearly it does not presuppose any thought on my part, and sensory ideas are produced without my cooperation and often even against my will. So sensory ideas must be produced by some substance other than me—a substance that actually has (either in a straightforward way or in a higher form) all the reality that is represented in the ideas that it produces. Either (a) this substance is a body, in which case it will · straightforwardly contain everything that is represented in

the ideas; or else (b) it is God, or some creature more noble than a body, in which case it will contain ·in a higher form whatever is to be found in the ideas. I can ·reject (b), and· be confident that God does not transmit sensory ideas to me either directly from himself or through some creature that does not straightforwardly contain what is represented in the ideas. God has given me no way of recognizing any such 'higher form' source for these ideas; on the contrary, he has strongly inclined me to believe that bodies produce them. So if the ideas were transmitted from a source other than corporeal things, God would be a deceiver; and he is not. So bodies exist. They may not all correspond exactly with my sensory intake of them, for much of what comes in through the senses is obscure and confused. But at least bodies have all the properties that I vividly and clearly understand, that is, all that fall within the province of pure mathematics.

Exercises

3. Descartes concludes. "bodies exist." What is his argument? Does it meet the standard of indubitability he has set for himself? (Note that subsequent philosophers have argued that it does not. They have argued for an idealist metaphysic. Idealism is the view that bodies, material entities, only exist in the mind, what might be an argument for idealism?)

·Those are the ·clearly understood properties of bodies ·in general·. What about ·less clearly understood properties (for example light or sound or pain), and properties of · particular bodies (for example the size or shape of the sun)? Although there is much doubt and uncertainty about them, I have a sure hope that I can reach the truth even in these matters. That is because God isn't a deceiver, which implies that he has given me the ability to correct any falsity there may be in my opinions. Indeed, everything that I am 'taught by nature' certainly contains some truth. For the term 'nature', understood in the most general way, refers to God himself or to the ordered system of created things established by him. And my own nature is simply the totality of things bestowed on me by God.

As vividly as it teaches me anything, my own nature teaches me that I have a body, that when I feel pain there is something wrong with this body, that when I am hungry or thirsty it needs food and drink, and so on. So I shouldn't doubt that there is some truth in this.

Nature also teaches me, through these sensations of pain, hunger, thirst and so on, that I (a thinking thing) am not merely in my body as a sailor is in a ship. Rather, I am closely joined to it—intermingled with it, so to speak—so that it and I form a unit. If this were not so, I wouldn't feel pain when the body was hurt but would perceive the damage in an intellectual way, like a sailor seeing that his ship needs repairs. And when the body needed food or drink I would intellectually understand this fact instead of (as I do) having confused sensations of hunger and thirst. These sensations are confused mental events that arise from the union—the intermingling, as it were—of the mind with the body.

Nature also teaches me that various other bodies exist in the vicinity of my body, and that I should seek out some of these and avoid others. Also, I perceive by my senses a

great variety of colours, sounds, smells and tastes, as well as differences in heat, hardness and so on; from which I infer that the bodies that cause these sensory perceptions differ from one another in ways that correspond to the sensory differences, though perhaps they don't resemble them. Furthermore, some perceptions are pleasant while others are nasty, which shows that my body—or rather my whole self insofar as I am a combination of body and mind—can be affected by the various helpful or harmful bodies that surround it.

However, some of what I thought I had learned from nature really came not from nature but from a habit of rushing to conclusions; and those beliefs could be false. Here are a few examples:

- *that if a region contains nothing that stimulates my senses, then it must be empty;*
- *that the heat in a body resembles my idea of heat;*
- *that the colour I perceive through my senses is also present in the body that I perceive;*
- *that in a body that is bitter or sweet there is the same taste that I experience, and so on;*
- *that stars and towers and other distant bodies have the same size and shape that they present to my senses.*

To think clearly about this matter, I need to define exactly what I mean when I say that 'nature teaches me' something. I am not at this point taking 'nature' to refer to the totality of what God has given me. From that totality I am excluding things that belong to the mind alone, such as my knowledge that what has been done can't be undone (I know this through the natural light, without help from the body). I am also excluding things that relate to the body alone, such as the tendency bodies have to fall downwards. My sole concern here is with what God has given to me as a combination of mind and body. My 'nature', then, in this limited sense, does indeed teach me to avoid what hurts and to seek out what gives pleasure, and so on. But it doesn't appear to teach us to rush to conclusions about things located outside us without pausing to think about the question; for knowledge of the truth about such things seems to belong to the mind alone, not to the combination of mind and body. So, although a star has no more effect on my eye than a candle's flame, my thinking of the star as no bigger than the flame does not come from any positive ·'natural'· inclination to believe this; it's just a habit of thought that I have had ever since childhood, with no rational basis for it. Similarly, although I feel heat when I approach a fire and feel pain when I go too near, there is no good reason to think that something in the fire resembles the heat or resembles the pain. There is merely reason to suppose that something or other in the fire causes feelings of heat or pain in us. Again, even when a region contains nothing that stimulates my senses, it does not follow that it contains no bodies. I now realize that in these cases and many others I have been in the habit of misusing the order of nature. The right way to use the sensory perceptions that nature gives me is as a guide to what is beneficial or harmful for my mind-body complex; and they are vivid and clear enough for that. But it is a misuse of them to treat them as reliable guides to the essential nature of the bodies located outside me, for on that topic they give only very obscure and confused information.

I have already looked closely enough at how I may come to make false judgments, even though God is good. Now it occurs to me that there is a problem about •mistakes I make regarding the things that nature tells me to seek out or avoid, and also regarding •some of my internal sensations. Some cases of this are unproblematic. Someone may be tricked into eating pleasant-tasting food that has poison concealed in it; but here nature urges the person towards the pleasant food, not towards the poison, which it doesn't know about. All this shows is that the person's nature doesn't know everything, and that is no surprise.

·Other cases, however, raise problems. They are ones where· nature urges us towards something that harms us ·and this can't be explained through nature's not knowing something·. Sick people, for example, may want food or drink that is bad for them. 'They go wrong because they are ill'—true, but the difficulty remains. A sick man is one of God's creatures just as a healthy one is, and in each case it seems a contradiction to suppose that God has given him a nature that deceives him. A badly made clock conforms to the laws of its nature in telling the wrong time, just as a well made and accurate clock does; and we might look at the human body in the same way. We could see it as a kind of machine made up of bones, nerves, muscles, veins, blood and skin in such a way that, even if there were no mind in it, it would still move exactly as it now does in all the cases where movement isn't under the control of the will or, therefore, of the mind. If such a body suffers from dropsy [a disease in which abnormal quantities of water accumulate in the body], for example, and is affected by the dryness of the throat that normally produces in the mind a sensation of thirst, that will affect the nerves and other bodily parts in such a way as to dispose the body to take a drink, which will make the disease worse. Yet this is as natural as a healthy body's being stimulated by a similar dryness of the throat to take a drink that is good for it. ·In a way, we might say, it is not natural·. Just as we could say that a clock that works badly is 'departing from its nature', we might say that the dropsical body that takes a harmful drink is 'departing from its nature', that is, from the pattern of movements that usually occur in human bodies. But that involves using 'nature' as a way of comparing one thing with another—a sick man with a healthy one, a badly made clock with an accurate one—whereas I have been using 'nature' not to make comparisons but to speak of what can be found in the things themselves; and this usage is legitimate.

When we describe a dropsical body as having 'a disordered nature', therefore, we are using the term 'nature' merely to compare sick with healthy. What has gone wrong in the mind-body complex that suffers from dropsy, however, is not a mere matter of comparison with something else. There is here a real, intrinsic error of nature, namely that the body is thirsty at a time when drink will cause it harm. We have to enquire how it is that the goodness of God does not prevent nature from deceiving us in this way. ·This enquiry will fall into four main parts·.

· There is a great difference between the mind and the body. Everybody is by its nature divisible, but the mind can't be divided. When I consider the mind—i.e. consider myself purely as a thinking thing—I can't detect any parts within myself; I understand myself to be something single and complete. The whole mind seems to be united to the whole body, ·but not by a uniting of parts to parts, because: · If a foot or arm or any other part of the body is cut off, nothing is thereby taken away from the mind. As for the faculties of willing, of understanding, of sensory perception and so on, these are not parts of the mind, since it is one and the same mind that wills, understands and perceives. ·They are (I repeat) not parts of the mind, because they are properties or powers of it·. By contrast, any corporeal thing can easily be divided into parts in my thought; and this shows me that it is really divisible. This one argument would be enough to show me that the mind is completely different from the body, even if I did not already know as much from other considerations.

·The mind isn't immediately affected by all parts of the body but only by the brain—or perhaps just by the small part of it which is said to contain the 'common sense'. [Descartes is referring to the pineal gland. The 'common sense' was a supposed faculty, postulated by Aristotle, whose role was to integrate the data from the five specialized senses.] The signals that reach the mind depend upon what state this part of the brain is in, irrespective of the condition of the other parts of the body. There is abundant experimental evidence for this, which I needn't review here.

·Whenever any part of the body is moved by another part that is some distance away, it can be moved in the same fashion by any of the parts that lie in between, without the more distant part doing anything. For example, in a cord ABCD, if one end D is pulled so that the other end A moves, A could have been moved in just the same way if B or C had been pulled and D had not moved at all. Similarly, when I feel a pain in my foot, this happens by means of nerves that run from the foot up to the brain. When the nerves are pulled in the foot, they pull on inner parts of the brain and make them move; and nature has laid it down that this motion should produce in the mind a sensation of pain as though occurring in the foot. But since these nerves stretch from the foot to the brain through the calf, the thigh, the lumbar region, the back and the neck, that same sensation of 'pain in the foot' can come about when one of the intermediate parts is pulled, even if nothing happens in the foot. This presumably holds for any other sensation.

·One kind of movement in the part of the brain that immediately affects the mind always produces just one kind of sensation; and it would be best for us if it were always the kind that would contribute the most to keeping us alive and well. Experience shows that the sensations that nature has given us are all of just such kinds; so everything about them bears witness to the power and goodness of God. For example, when the nerves in the foot are set in motion in a violent and unusual manner, this motion reaches the inner parts of the brain via the spinal cord, and gives the mind its signal for having a sensation of a pain as occurring in the foot. This stimulates the mind to do its best to remove the cause of the pain, which it takes to be harmful to the foot. God could have made our nature such that this motion in the brain indicated something else to the mind—for example, making the mind aware of the actual motion occurring in the brain, or in the foot, or in any of the intermediate regions. [Descartes is here contrasting the foot with other parts of the body, and contrasting a feeling of pain with a merely intellectual awareness that a movement is occurring.] But nothing else would have been so conducive to the continued well-being of the body. In the same way, when

we need drink a certain dryness arises in the throat; this moves the nerves of the throat, which in turn move the inner parts of the brain. That produces in the mind a sensation of thirst, because the most useful thing for us to know at this point is that we need drink in order to stay healthy. Similarly in the other cases.

All of this makes it clear that, despite God's immense goodness, the nature of man as a combination of mind and body is such that it is bound to mislead him from time to time. For along the route of the nerves from the foot to the brain, or even in the brain itself, something may happen that produces the same motion that is usually caused by injury to the foot; and then pain will be felt as if it were in the foot. This deception of the senses is natural, because a given kind of motion in the brain must always produce the same kind of sensation in the mind; and, given that this kind of motion usually originates in the foot, it is reasonable that it should produce a sensation indicating a pain in the foot. Similarly with dryness of the throat: it is much better that it should mislead on the rare occasion when the person has dropsy than that it should always mislead when the body is in good health. The same holds for the other cases.

This line of thought greatly helps me to be aware of all the errors to which my nature is liable, and also to correct or avoid them. For I know that so far as bodily well-being is concerned my senses usually tell the truth. Also, I can usually employ more than one sense to investigate the same thing; and I can get further help from my memory, which connects present experiences with past ones, and from my intellect, which has by now examined all the sources of error. So I should have no more fears about the falsity of what my senses tell me every day; on the contrary, the exaggerated doubts of the last few days should be dismissed as laughable. This applies especially to the chief reason for doubt, namely my inability to distinguish dreams from waking experience. For I now notice that the two are vastly different, in that dreams are never linked by memory with all the other actions of life as waking experiences are. If, while I am awake, a man were suddenly to appear to me and then disappear immediately, as happens in sleep, so that I couldn't see where he had come from or where he had gone to, I could reasonably judge that he was a ghost or an hallucination rather than a real man. But if I have a firm grasp of when, where and whence something comes to me, and if I can connect my perception of it with the whole of the rest of my life without a break, then I am sure that in encountering it I am not asleep but awake. And I ought not to have any doubt of its reality if that is unanimously confirmed by all my senses as well as my memory and intellect. From the fact that God isn't a deceiver it follows that in cases like this I am completely free from error. But since everyday pressures don't always allow us to pause and check so carefully, it must be admitted that human life is vulnerable to error about particular things, and we must acknowledge the weakness of our nature.

Exercises

4. Having established in the first half of Meditation 6 that material things exist, Descartes, in the second half, addresses a number of issues that are of crucial importance for the philosophy and science that comes after the Meditations. Briefly summarize what Descartes claims about each of the following:

a. The difference between his existence as a mind that reasons and understands and his existence as a body in space. (This view that human beings exist as both mind and body is known as "Cartesian dualism" — or, sometimes, just "dualism." Cartesian dualism consists of two separate claims. First the universe consists of two fundamentally different types of entities (substances). These are material

entities, a.k.a. “bodies” and minds a.k.a. “thinking things.” Second is the claim that Descartes himself and other human beings exist as minds that are intimately tied to bodies.)

b. The reason why we are prone to error regarding material things as they are disclosed to us by the senses and how we can be free of errors in our understanding.

c. How we are to approach understanding bodies. (Here Descartes presents a “mechanical” agenda for understanding bodies, his comparison of a body to clock should provide insight into the approach.)

5. Do you have any questions or additional comments?

IV. EMPIRICISM, SKEPTICISM, AND TRANSCENDENTAL IDEALISM: HUME TO KANT

A. Introduction to Part IV

Descartes, in his *Meditations on First Philosophy* as well in other works such as *Discourse on the Method of Rightly Conducting One's Reason and of Seeking Truth in the Sciences* attempts to provide a philosophical foundation and a philosophical method that will enable the justification of the truth of scientific claims and resist skeptical doubt. While Descartes' cogito argument is widely endorsed as providing an indubitable truth about the existence of the thinking thing, the remainder of his philosophical argument is the subject of substantive philosophical disputation. This section of *What is Philosophy?* Focuses on some of the key epistemic (remember, epistemology is the branch of philosophy that studies the nature and the possibility of knowledge) arguments that followed Descartes and are characteristic of the period in philosophy we now call "early modern philosophy." Early modern philosophy was a cosmopolitan, pan-European movement that anticipated and then came to coincide with a what we now call "the Enlightenment." The next section of this book will investigate the philosophy of the Enlightenment. This will be followed by a section on Existentialism, a philosophical movement that can be seen as a reaction against core aspects of the Enlightenment project.

Following Descartes, the primary focus of much early modern philosophy was providing justification of the truth of scientific claims and resisting skeptical doubt. For our purposes we will date this period from the publication of Descartes *Discourse on the Method* in 1637 to the death of the philosopher David Hume in 1776. This dating is largely a matter of convenience. Many historians of philosophy consider the philosopher Immanuel Kant, who came after Hume and whose arguments you will learn about in the next section to be the last of the early modern philosophers. However, for our purposes, ending early modern philosophy with Hume serves to emphasize that in the philosophy of Hume the empiricist attempt to provide a foundation for philosophical knowledge in the facts of our experience comes to a cul-de-sac. As we shall see, Hume's philosophy leads to a radical change in the goals of philosophical epistemology. This change is seen in the philosophy of Immanuel Kant. This section will end with Kant.

Part Four of this book is divided into four parts. It begins with an overview of some of the core philosophical positions regarding the nature of knowledge and uses this to introduce you to empiricist philosophy. Empiricism is the view that all knowledge of the world is based on our experience of the world. After this, the second part of this section is an exposition of the philosophy of the Scottish empiricist philosopher David Hume. Hume is notable because his empiricist philosophy leads to skepticism about our ability to demonstrate the truth of scientific knowledge. Immanuel Kant's philosophy is an attempt to revive the possibility of providing a foundation for scientific knowledge and to rescue philosophy from the chasm of skepticism that Hume's empiricism seems to open up. This attempt is the topic of the third part of this section. Finally, the section will conclude with a brief reflection on the implications of the traditions in philosophy that begin with Descartes and end with Hume.

B. Knowledge and Empiricism

1. Some comments on knowledge

Exercises

After reading this section, can you answer the following questions?

What it the difference between having a belief, having a true belief and knowing?

What makes a true assertion true?

What is a criterion for knowledge? How do criteria for knowledge relate to what makes a true assertion true?

How does a regress of justification show that knowing one knows cannot be a criterion for knowledge?

Before discussing the empiricist tradition, it is important to understand a distinction that is often assumed in the philosophical discussion of the nature of knowledge. This is the distinction between belief, true belief, knowledge and truth.

Belief: While there has been and continues to be a great deal of philosophical discussion, especially in the late 19th and early 20th century, about the nature of belief and of what constitutes a belief, for now we will note that **belief** may refer to **the psychological state of having a belief or to the semantic content of that psychological state**.

Belief as *the psychological state of having a belief* may be understood as having an opinion. In this sense a belief may be understood as synonymous as an opinion.

Belief as *the **semantic content** of the psychological state of having a belief* refers to the psychological state of holding a **proposition** to be true. A proposition is the meaning content of a statement or an assertion. Propositions are distinguished from statements or assertions because two different assertions can have the same meaning content. Thus, the meaning content of the assertion, "It is raining," is the same even if one utters a different statement by expressing that meaning content in French, "*Il pleut*." Whether one asserts that it is raining in Hindi, Cantonese, or Swahili, one is asserting the same thing. What one is asserting is the **semantic content** of the assertion. This semantic content is the proposition. Propositions, like assertions, have the property of being true or false.

We all have a vast number of beliefs. Some of these are true and some are false. It is important to note that the possession of a belief has no bearing on its truth. This is shown by the **principle of non-contradiction**, for any belief has a negation and either the belief or its negation will be true, but not both.

> It is either raining or it is not raining.

It cannot both rain and not rain at the same location in space-time.

Thus, “It is raining here and now” and “It is not raining here and now” cannot both be true.

Truth: The mention of true and false belief above brings us to the issue of truth. In the traditional view of truth, which shall serve us for now, **a proposition is true if it corresponds to the way things are.** The way things are is a metaphysical issue, a question of what is. Philosophers, except a few **subjective idealists**, agree that one’s belief that something is true does not make it true. This is important when one comes to discuss issues like morality and the existence of God where it seems as though the truth of the matter cannot be determined by reference to sensation or experience. (Which leads to an interesting aside: What would count as evidence for the existence of God? Do, for example, Descartes’ arguments, work and, if so, why?)

On subjective idealism (also called subjectivist relativism or just subjectivism)

It is not uncommon for individuals to claim what appears to be a subjective idealist account of truth. An instance of this is the casual assertion that “everyone has their own truth.” Philosophically this is best interpreted as meaning “everyone has their own beliefs.” Subjective idealists take this assertion one step further. They assert that the way things are is determined by whatever one believes the way things are. This view is usually rejected because it leads to a violation of the principle of non-contradiction. For example, one person can believe that it is raining here and now. Another person can believe it is not raining here and now. However, the principle of non-contradiction shows that it cannot be both snowing and not raining. Therefore, the ways things are cannot correspond to both these persons’ beliefs. One of them must be wrong. If one of them is wrong, then subjective idealism is false.

True Belief: Now we can define true belief as a belief that corresponds to the way things are. My belief that it is raining is true if, at the time and place I have the belief, it **is** raining. It is a false belief if it is not raining. Having a true belief is not the same as knowing. The concept of knowledge includes some kind of evidence or justification for the truth of the belief. For example, as I write I could believe that it is raining in Buenos Aires, Argentina. If it is raining in Buenos Aires, then my belief is true. If it is not raining in Buenos Aires, then my belief is false. Even if it is true that it is raining in Buenos Aires, I do not *know* it is raining, for I have not looked at a weather report for the current conditions. It is simply a belief that happens to be true. To use the terminology of logic, having a true belief is a necessary but not sufficient condition for knowledge. In other words, in order to know, one **must** have a true belief (necessary condition) but having a true belief alone does not give one knowledge (not a sufficient condition).

Knowledge: Knowledge may now be defined as a **justified true belief**. In other words, one has knowledge when one has good reasons (justification) for holding that one’s belief is true. The view that knowledge is a justified true belief is sometimes called the tripartite definition of knowledge because it says that for there to be knowledge three conditions need to be meet: 1) One must have a belief. This is to say that all knowledge claims must have propositional content. 2) The belief must be true. It must agree with the way things are. 3) The belief must be justified. One must have good reasons for believing the belief is true.

Justification: Much of the discussion in epistemology and early modern philosophy revolves around the issue of what counts as justification. Minimally, it is often claimed that justification must be **truth conducive**. If truth is agreement between a proposition and the way things are, then the justification must show this agreement. This raises the issue: How does one show this agreement between an assertion and the way things are? This question leads to **the problem of the criterion for knowledge** arises. This is the problem of what counts as a sufficient justification for knowing. Sometimes this is interpreted as the question of

whether, in order to have knowledge, one needs to know that one knows. The obvious problem with the view that to know one needs to know is that it leads to a **regress of justification**.

The **problem of a regress of justification** goes like this:

> To know one needs to know one knows.
>
> In order to know one knows, one needs to know one knows one knows.
>
> To know one knows one knows, one needs to know one knows one knows one knows.
>
> And so on... *ad infinitum* (to infinity)

(A series of claims that logical entails an infinite number of other claims is called a logical regress.)

Because of this, it is usually denied that knowledge depends on knowing that one knows. Rather it is asserted that belief must have sufficient justification if it is to count as knowledge, but this leads to the question of what counts as sufficient justification. In response to this it is said that some beliefs are self-justifying. What we will come to know as **a priori truths** are typically believed to be self-justifying. An example of such beliefs is a **tautology**, propositions whose predicate contains the same propositional (meaning) content as their predicate: A bachelor is an unmarried man. Such statements can be logically reduced to A=A, which of course tells one nothing about the world. For epistemology the question then becomes: How can one have self-justifying propositions that are not tautologies?

Certainty: For most modern philosophers (philosophers during the time period from Descartes through Kant) one only has knowledge if one is certain. This is not usually seen as a fourth condition for knowledge. Instead, as we saw in Descartes, justification is given by epistemic certainty. When one is not certain one simply has a belief that may be true.

Before doing the next part of this reading watch:

A YouTube element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: https://whatisphilosophy.pressbooks.sunycreate.cloud/?p=206

(Note: the last part of this video is concerned with Gettier cases. Wonder about them, but do not worry about them. Gettier cases will not be on the test.)

Then, after watching the video, go over the reading again and then answer and discuss the "Exercises" questions above on the appropriate discussion board.

2. Empiricism

Introduction

Exercises

After reading this section, viewing the linked video, and, then, re-reading this, you should be able to answer the following questions.

What it the difference between rationalist and empiricist epistemologies?

What is the problem of the idols of the mind?

What is Hobbes method of resolution and composition?

According to Locke the source of ideas is ....

What is Locke's argument against innate ideas? (What is the rationalist's response to this argument?)

Explain the distinction between primary and secondary qualities. Explain Berkeley's objection to this distinction.

What is Locke's theory of substance? His theory of general ideas? His theory of personal identity?

How, according to Berkeley, does empiricism and common-sense lead to metaphysical idealism?

Modern Philosophical thought is often seen as a debate between two different approaches to the problem of knowledge. These approaches are characterized as *empiricism* and *rationalism*. Rationalism is seen as a tradition that stems from the work of Rene Descartes and it is sometimes called *Cartesian rationalism*. The Cartesian rationalist is committed to the view that reason is the source or foundation of knowledge. Thus, Descartes claims in his *Meditations* to be able to derive the foundations for knowledge through the use of reason and reason alone. These foundations for knowledge the series of proposition argued for in the *Meditations*:

(1) He knows he exists as a thinking thing.

(2) He is a thinking thing.

(3) God exists.

(4) God is no deceiver.

(5) There exists a world of material things outside of his thought.

(6) He has a body as well as a mind.

The most well-known rationalists who followed Descartes are Spinoza and Leibniz.

Opposed to this rationalist tradition is the tradition of the empiricism, or, commonly, British empiricism. The philosophers who created this tradition are called "British empiricists" because most of them were from the British Isles and wrote in English. What unites British empiricists is a commitment to the view that one cannot have substantive knowledge based on reason alone.

Thus, we have the following distinction:

Rationalism: One can have knowledge of the world from reason alone.

Empiricism: Knowledge of the world (or knowledge of facts) must come from experience. Reason is a tool that one uses to combine and compare experiences.

Empiricism is usually seen as beginning with John Locke's attack, in his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, on innate ideas or ideas that are in the mind from birth. Locke claims that the mind begins as a *tabula rasa*, or a blank tablet. Experience is then said to write on the tablet of the mind. Given this

view, **everything that humans can know must be derived from experience. If there is no experience of something, then there can be no knowledge of that thing**. These basic claims are accepted by all empiricist thinkers. Following Locke, Berkeley (pronounced ***bark***-*lee*; the city in California is called ***berk***-*lee*) and Hume work through the consequences of this basic empiricist commitment to the grounding of knowledge in experience. Berkeley uses empiricism to give what he considers to be a defense of common sense based on empiricist principles. However, **Berkeley's defense of common sense takes him to the counterintuitive conclusion that there are no material things, there are only ideas of things**. This view is known as ***metaphysical idealism***. Hume, on the other hand, reasons from empiricist principles to conclusions that seem to go against common sense, such as the view that there is no evidence for the existence of a substantial self and that there is no good reason to believe that events in the world are linked by a causal relation. Hume's revolution (Hume died in 1776) leads to a rethinking of the whole approach of modern philosophy in the work of Kant. This will be addressed in the next section of this chapter.

The foundations for British empiricism were laid by the thinkers Francis Bacon (1561-1626) and Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679).

Francis Bacon

Bacon attacked what he called "**the idols of the mind**." These idols interfere with the ability of human beings to have knowledge. These idols are the

(1) the idols of the tribe

(2) the idols of the den

(3) the idols of the marketplace

(4) the idols of the theatre

(https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/francis-bacon/#Ido)

Bacon's attack on these various idols amounts to an attack on knowledge that is based on the authority. Bacon advocates that instead of thinking on the basis of authority one ought to use empirical methods to investigate the world and induction to arrive at general conclusions from one's experiments. Bacon is usually not studied carefully in the study of the modern philosophical tradition because he did not address the basic problems of knowledge discussed by so many in this tradition. He took for granted our understanding of tools of experience, experiment, and induction as tools to knowledge. The main empiricist tradition is founded on a careful examination and elucidation of these tools.

Thomas Hobbes

Hobbes, on the other hand, is carefully studied by contemporary philosophers, but more for his ethical and political philosophy than his epistemic ideas. His great work, *Leviathan* is considered on of the most important works of political theory. Hobbes was a contemporary of Descartes. Descartes sent copies of his *Meditations on First Philosophy* to many of the leading scholars of his day. One of these scholars was Hobbes. Descartes then published his *Meditations* with "Objections and Replies" from Hobbes and other scholars who had responded to his work.

Like Descartes and Bacon, Hobbes was concerned with reforming the means by which knowledge was

obtained. Hobbes proposes the method of **resolution and composition**. This method is analogous to the analytic and synthetic methods of Descartes' four rules of his method of knowledge.

Descartes' analytic method (Hobbes' **resolution**) is, "divide each of the difficulties I examined into as many parts as possible and as may be required in order to resolve them better." In other words, when you examine a problem, break the problem down into its most basic parts and address those basic parts first.

Descartes' synthetic method (Hobbes' **composition**) is, "beginning with the simplest and most easily known objects … ascend little by little, step by step, to knowledge of the most complex." This means that once you solve the basic problems, use your answers to them to move on to the more complex problems.

However, Hobbes does not follow these rules in a systematic way.

Also, unlike Descartes, Hobbes focuses on language rather than ideas. This focus on language becomes an important part of the method of 20th century analytic philosophers. For Hobbes, all thought begins in experience, in sensation. Sensation leads to what he calls **images**, and images to **imagination** and **memory**. Only that which is experienced can be thought. Thoughts are divided by Hobbes into unregulated thought, which occurs at random and without our control, and regulated thought, which occurs through words. Regulated thought is the search for causal relations.

All thought, according to Hobbes, is always directed towards the fulfillment of a goal, end, or desire. Ultimately, according to Hobbes, we all desire pleasure. Thus, we use words to order our thought so we can understand the word and find the fulfillment of our desire for pleasure. This view, that all good is reducible to pleasure, is called **hedonism**. All human beings are, in Hobbes view, basically egoistic (selfish) and they all seek egoistic pleasure (desire) and avoid egoistic pain (aversion). For Hobbes, the key to orderly thought is proper definition. It is careful definition that allows a person to think in an orderly way.

Whereas Descartes is a dualist, someone who believes that there are two fundamentally different substances that make up reality, Hobbes is a **metaphysical materialist**. Metaphysical materialism is a variety of **metaphysical monism**. Metaphysical monism is the view that there is only one type of substance or stuff that is used to make everything that exists. The metaphysical materialist believes that everything is made of matter. The metaphysical idealist believes that everything is mind, or idea. The dualist believes that there is both mind and matter. Because Hobbes is a materialist, he needs to explain the nature of thought and of mind. This explanation must rely on nothing other than material entities. While he made some attempts to do this, Hobbes never fully developed a philosophy of mind. Some philosophers speculate that Hobbes was an epiphenomenalist. An epiphenomenalist holds that the mind has unique qualities that are caused by physical processes but do not affect physical processes. So, for example, the colors of a rainbow are a direct result of physical processes, but these colors have no effect on the physical world. Color sensation, is a unique mental event and cannot be understood in purely physical terms.

John Locke

Due to his attack, in his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, on the Cartesian theory of innate ideas, John Locke (1632-1704) is considered the true founder of British Empiricism. Locke's *Essay* is a long, convoluted yet philosophically profound and fruitful work. It is quite a task to read it beginning to end, but a careful reading of it is an important philosophical education. One may reject much of what Locke has to say, but one will learn a great deal by doing so. Locke's *Essay* should be considered as both a psychological and epistemic text. For Locke, these two subjects were much the same. For Locke, to understand what one understands is to understand how the mind works. The core concerns of the *Essay* are:

What is the origin and nature of ideas?

How one can have knowledge of one's ideas?

What is the nature of and limits to knowledge?

Thus, when we discuss, for example, Locke's theory of substance, it is crucial to keep in mind that the issue is not what substance *is*, but what can be *known about* substance. This distinction, between what one can know about the world and what is the case in the world is a crucial distinction in understanding modern philosophy. One of the key insights of modern philosophy is that knowing the limits of what one knows and what one can know is an essential dimension of having knowledge.

The source of all understanding is, for Locke, ideas. This is a necessary truth because Locke defines an idea as any object of human thought or understanding. Thus, to understand is to understand ideas.

Ideas have two sources:

(1) Sensation, which is the appearance of external objects as mediated by the sense organs and (2) Reflection, which is one's experience of how the mind works.

All ideas therefore are derived, according to Locke from experience of either sensations or reflections. An idea of an orange is the product of seeing its color, touching its skin, peeling it, smelling it and then, finally, tasting it. The idea of whether you like oranges is based on your reflection, your observations, about how you feel when you taste an orange.

Given this, it is clear why Locke would attack innate ideas. If all ideas come from experience, and one has no experience, then one can have no ideas. In his *Essay* Locke takes the main argument for the existence of innate ideas as the argument that there are universal principles that are agreed upon by all mankind. In other words, on Locke's view, the argument for innate ideas goes:

P1. If all humanity agrees that a rule or principle is true, then that rule or principle is innate.

P2. There are rules or principles that all humanity agrees upon.

(e.g. the Pythagorean theorem[1])

C. There are innate ideas.

This is a **valid** argument. Therefore, the only way to argue against the conclusion is to show one of the premises false.

Locke does this by arguing that universal assent counts for nothing with regard to whether an idea is innate. Locke claims that both P1 and P2 are false.

P2 is false, Locke argues, because (1) there may not be universal assent to any given ideas. This includes ideas such as "all triangles have three sides. Locke says that "children and idiots" may not agree with the truth of so-called universally agreed upon rules and principles. For example, do you **know** that the Pythagorean theorem is true (can you justify its truth?) or do you believe it on authority?

P1 is also false, Locke argues, because (2) universal assent on the part of all rational individuals does not provide evidence for innateness. He argues that this is the case because (a) reason uncovers no new

1. In a right angled triangle: the square of the hypotenuse is equal to the sum of the squares of the other two sides.

ideas and (b) reason is only a capacity for inference about what is already known. This second assertion is consistent with what Locke says about reflection. In Locke's view, this means that only **analytic truths** (**statements whose predicate asserts no more than what is asserted in the predicate,** e.g. **tautologies**) can be universally known to be true. Examples of such truths are sweetness is not bitterness and 2 2=4.

This argument, in various variations has been used by generations of empiricists to argue against a variety of rationalist philosophies. We will se it again, in a slightly different form, in Hume. We will also see a rationalist response to it in the work of Kant. At this point we should only observe that most Cartesian rationalists, and certainly not Descartes, did not argue for innate ideas of the sort that Locke attacks. They argued for ideas that are universal to all rational beings. These may not be ideas one is born with. Rather, they are ideas that any rational being will agree to. In light of this, there is good reason to reject Locke's rejection of rationalism based on his argument against "innate ideas."

In any case, according to Locke, the source for all ideas is experience. There are, Locke says, two types of experience, sensation and reflection. One only has ideas when one is aware of them. There are no unconscious ideas. All ideas begin as simple ideas. A simple idea is a single appearance or conception. Locke spends a great deal of time discussing the different types of simple ideas and the sources and objects of such ideas. Perhaps the most important distinction Locke makes is between our ideas of primary and secondary qualities.

Primary qualities are the qualities of the things we sense that cannot be separated from the things themselves. Examples of primary qualities: solidity, extension, figure, motion, rest, and number.

Secondary qualities are qualities that come from the sensation of the object of sensation. Examples of secondary qualities: texture, color, taste, tone and odor. Something smells the way it smells only to some smeller. Thus, it is wrong to say that something stinks. Rather, one should say, it stinks to me.

We perform various operations on our simple ideas. Locke says that

(1) we distinguish one idea from another,

(2) we compare ideas to each other,

(3) we combine these ideas,

(4) we name ideas by associating them with sounds and

(5) we frame abstract ideas by isolating specific aspects of our ideas that we find exemplified in many things. Thus, I can compare my idea of the color of a leaf and the color of grass and abstract the general idea or universal *green* from these two ideas.

Using these operations, we combine simple ideas into complex ideas.

Locke distinguishes between three types of complex ideas:

(1) **Ideas of modes**: ideas of the ways in which things can be in themselves.

Things have duration, they exist in space, they can move, they have number and color. These qualities of things are qualities they have without any relation to anything else.

(2) **Ideas of relations**: ideas of things in terms of other things.

Perhaps the most important of these, and one that is the subject of much philosophical discussion, is the

idea of cause and effect. Other ideas of relations include identity (the same as), difference (different then), and location (to the right of, below).

(3) **Ideas of substance**: This is the most abstract of the three modes of complex ideas.

Substance is that which makes a thing the thing that is it. It is the defining essence of the thing that is unique to that thing.

Locke distinguishes **substance in general**, ideas of **particular substances** and **collective ideas of substance**.

Because we identify things as particular things, we need to explain what makes a thing the thing that it is, if we can find this, we have identified its **particular substance**.

Because things also exist as collective kinds, trees, chairs or COVID-19 the **collective substance** is what makes each of these things a member of the class, collection, or kind that they are.

Substance in general is that which things that exist possess. It is what they are made off. It is that which existing things have but non-existing things do not have.

If the concept of substance, and especially the concept of substance in general, seems very abstract, it is. Philosophers have struggled with the nature of substance since Aristotle and continue to do so today. For Locke, substance is a necessary thing. It is what makes something *some thing* as opposed to *no thing*. However, Locke, consistent with his empiricism, claims we only experience of particular sensations. We have no experience of that which underlies these sensations. Because of this, we cannot know what substance is apart from the things that have it. It is necessary to the understanding but beyond our experience. Thus, it is Locke famously claims, a something, but "I know not what."

Another idea that, in Locke's view, we must have but cannot tie to any experience is our idea of a soul. We know of the effects of a soul and, he argues, these effects cannot be the result of any material substance. He concludes that there must be an immaterial soul, but we cannot have any experience of it. This causes a problem for Locke, because, given this, how is one to explain personal identity? Reflection will make it clear that the material body of a person changes in every way through the course of an individual's life. What then makes a person the person who s/he is? The traditional explanation is that people possess immortal souls and it is the soul that makes one who one is. But Locke says that this explanation does not work since one can have no knowledge of the soul beyond knowledge of its conceptual necessity. This conceptually necessary but unknowable thing cannot be the basis of our how we remain the same person even though all our perceivable qualities change. Because we cannot explain personal identity by reference to an immortal soul, Locke claims that our sense of self is the result of the conscious awareness of the self. We are whom we think about ourselves as being and whom we remember ourselves as being. This is an **epistemic notion of the self**. Locke is not explaining what the self is. He is saying that, as far as we can know, **the self is what we think of the self as being**. This notion of the self is a controversial notion that we shall see taken up by Hume.

The above discussion of substance, the soul, and personal identity should make it clear that Locke's commitment to empiricism forces him to acknowledge some profound limits on what human beings can know. Knowledge of things beyond one's immediate experience is a very limited form of knowledge. First, **knowledge of what is immediately experienced is not knowledge of what is the case**. **It is knowledge of what one experiences as the case**. Thus, I can argue that I can know, with certainty, that I see yellow. However, seeing a thing as yellow does not mean that the thing that I see *is* yellow. I could have jaundice. I could be dreaming and what I "see" is not real! This means that Locke does not have a solution to Descartes' doubt. He grants that, if there is a deceiver, our knowledge is of the world as we are deceived into believing it to be.

For knowledge of things beyond immediate experience we must think in terms of universals or general ideas. For example, to know about dogs one must have a general idea of Dog or dogness. One way of understanding these general ideas is that they refer to actual things. These things are called universals and those who argue for the existence of universals are called Platonic realists. This is what Diotima claims in the *Symposium*. Platonic realists argue that a statement like "Dogs are descended from wolves" can only be a true statement if the statement refers to things (dogs, wolfs) that actually exist. So, they claim, since the statement "Dogs are descended from wolves," is a true statement the general terms "dogs," "wolves," and "descended from" must refer to something. The Platonic realist calls that which they refer to a universal. Locke, like Hobbes before him, is a nominalist. Nominalists deny the existence of universals. General ideas, according to Locke, are formed around words and reflect the way the minds of human beings make sense of the world. All we can every encounter in our thought are our ideas and the combination of those ideas into general ideas built around that category of words called general terms. General terms are simply names that we give to the arrangements of our ideas.

Locke agrees with Descartes that to have knowledge one must have certainty. This means that, for the Locke the emiricist, there are sharp limits on what we can know. We can have knowledge of our experience. We can have knowledge that comes from the comparison of the ideas we derive from experience. We can have intuitive knowledge of our own existence and we can prove that god exists through the cosmological argument and through the need for there to be a cause of our own existence. Regarding other things, we can only have knowledge of them in terms of our sensation of them. These sharp limits on knowledge, herald the beginning of a slide into the skepticism of Hume.

George Berkeley

Bishop George Berkeley (1685-1753) was a Bishop of the Church of England who argued from **empiricist epistemology** to an **idealist metaphysics** in order, he claimed, to defend common sense. Berkeley saw himself as using empiricism to argue against some of the conclusions of **corpuscular atomism** and the Lockean distinction between primary and secondary qualities.

According to the scientific worldview of the corpuscularists (the view of such eminent thinkers as Galileo, Descartes (when he was speaking about the material world), Boyle, Hobbes, and Newton) there exists absolute time and absolute space. Space is a three-dimensional field in which there are atoms (called *corpuscles*). It is within this space that things move. These notions of absolute space and times allow for a mathematical framework that allows one to measure velocity, motion and force. Thus, the basic characteristics of the world consist of location at a certain, shape, size, mass and movement from one location to another location. These characteristics are the primary qualities of things. Secondary qualities, heat, sound, smell, color, etc. are the result of an organism perceiving the primary qualities. The taste of sweetness occurs when the appropriate sensors in the tongue are stimulated by the appropriately shaped molecules.

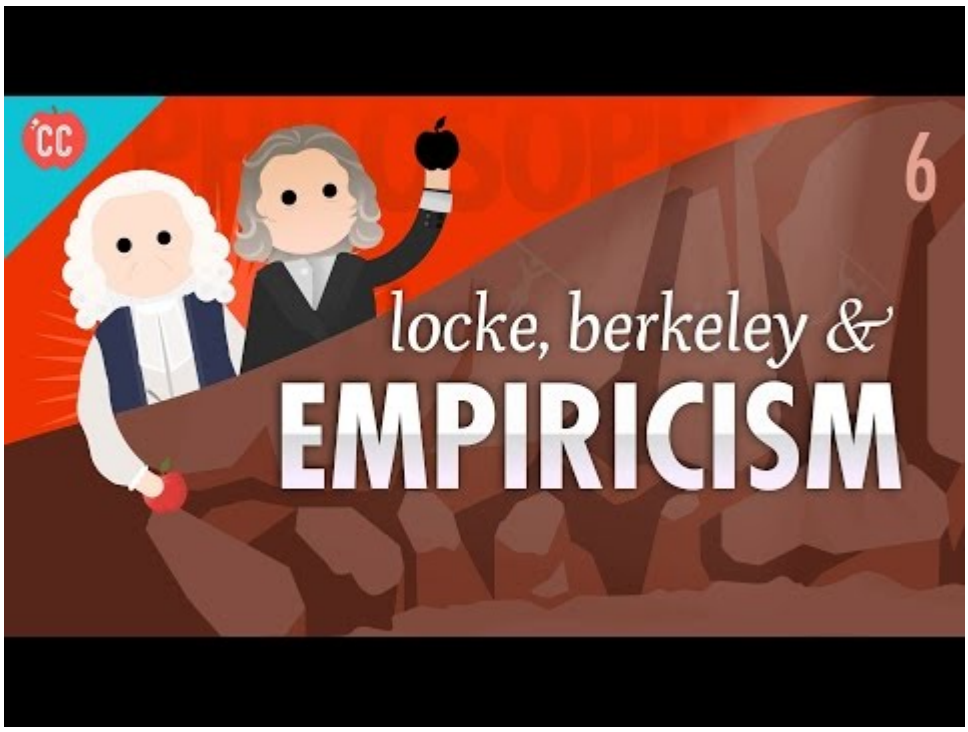
Berkeley is opposed to this view because he sees it as contrary to common sense. Common sense tells use that things are as they are perceived. A red truck is really red. Candy is sweet. Skunks stink. Berkeley also argues that things exist as they are independent of our perception of them. Corpusclarism, he argues, violates both of these principles. In the first place, it says that things are not red, we only perceive them as red. Skunks do not stink, we perceive them as stinking. Secondly, Berkeley asserts that according to common sense, things have the qualities they do even when they not perceived. The corpuscularist is committed to arguing that a fire truck is not red on a dark night or when it is in the firehouse and no one is looking at it. Philosophy confuses us by making distinctions that result from confusions about ideas. This

confusion, Berkeley holds, eventually leads to skepticism and atheism. In order to be protected from these consequences, it needs to be shown that these denials of what we know by common sense are based on philosophical errors. Berkeley's work is part of a philosophical tradition that attempts to use philosophy to cure us of the symptoms of the disease of poor philosophy.

Much of this confusion is the result on philosophers use of abstract ideas. Berkeley asserts that abstract ideas are incoherent; they make no sense. Think, he asks, about the abstract idea of red. Clearly it is an idea of a color, for red is a color, but what color is it an idea of? There are many shades of red. Which shade of red is the idea of red? What about one's idea of *person*? How tall is *person*? We have, Berkeley allows, general terms and these general terms refer to a variety of particular things, but there is no abstract idea that corresponds to these general terms. All there is are particular things that we group together by designating them with general terms. The problem with philosophy is that its use of general terms and its belief that general terms refer to abstract ideas makes it forget that there are only particulars. (Like Locke and Hobbes Berkeley is a nominalist.) There are particular things and particular ideas that are caused by specific experiences. Ideas and the things we have ideas of only exist as they are perceived. ***Esse* is *percipi***. The whole of what we think and can conceive comes from our perceptions. Can, he would ask, you think of something that exists outside of thought?

Berkeley's argument for idealism both agrees and contradicts our most basic intuitions about the world. We believe that things are as we perceive them to be. Berkeley argues that this intuition is correct. We believe that things have an existence independent of our perception of them. Berkeley agrees with this as well. He is not a subjective idealist. He believes that things exist as objective entities independent of any individual's perception because **they have a real existence in the mind of God**. This means he is an **absolute idealist**. Things exist as they are in the absolute mind of God. However, we also believe that things exist as material entities. Berkeley asserts that this is not the case. He argues that this belief is incoherent. We can only conceive of things as ideas, so it makes no sense to assert that they are other than ideas. It seems that something has to give here. If Berkeley's rescue of common sense works, we have to give up our belief that things have a material reality independent of their existence as ideas. If, on the other hand, we insist upon the material reality of things that we perceive then the gap between idea, perception, and reality remains and we are stuck, once again, with the old problem of the criterion for knowledge. How do we know that are ideas of things corresponds to the material reality of things. Is the apple red? Is it sweet?

Now, having done this reading, this reading watch:



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Then, after watching the video, go over the reading again and then answer and discuss the questions at the start of this section on the appropriate discussion board.

C. Hume's Fork and Mitigated Skepticism

1. Introduction: Hume and Kant

David Hume (1711—1776)

David Hume was born to a family from Berwickshire, which is near Edinburgh Scotland. He was educated at home until, at 11 years old, he went to the University of Edinburgh. He left Edinburgh at age 15 and began to study independently. It was then that he became interested in Philosophy and began to question his religious beliefs. As a young man he lived in Scotland, England and France. In 1739 and 1740 he published his three volume Treatise of Human Nature. Hume's Treatise, which is now considered to be one of the great works of philosophy, was largely ignored at the time. Subsequent to the Treatise Hume published is two-volume Essays, Moral and Political. These were written for a general audience and were more popular than the Treatise. This success led Hume, in 1748, to publish the Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding (also known as the "first Enquiry"). The first Enquiry is a review of the key line of argument in Book I of Hume's Treatise. It is written much more in the style of Hume's Essay than that or the Treatise. It is a portion of this line of argument that I am going to have you learn.

After the publication of the first Enquiry Hume published the Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals and his Political Discourses. Both of these books were widely praised and were influential on the next generation of Scottish and English political and economic thinkers including Jeremy Bentham, Adam Smith, William Godwin, and Thomas Malthus.

Hume unsuccessfully sought a professorship at the University of Glasgow. He was unsuccessful in part due to his reputation for anti-religious views. He did gain employment as librarian of the Advocate's Library in Edinburgh. While there he wrote much of his highly successful six-volume History of England (published from 1754 to 1762). He later wrote two works on religion The Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion and The Natural History of Religion. The Dialogues was, on advice from Hume's friends, not published until after his death. Hume continued to publish and to be a controversial figure until his death. In his personal life he was a bon vivant, someone who loved life and the joyous living of his life. During one of his stays in Paris the woman of Paris came to call him "le bon David" (the good David) because he was so joyous and awkwardly charming.

Immanuel Kant (1724-1804)

Immanuel Kant, unlike David Hume, has a reputation for being anything other than a bon vivant. Kant was born in in the Prussian city of Königsberg (now Kaliningrad in Russia) and lived there his whole life. Kant attended the University of Königsberg where he later became a professor. Kant began his professorial career as a Cartesian Rationalist using the kind of rationalist philosophy that was widely accepted among German philosophers of his time. In the early 1770s, Kant discovered Hume's skepticism. This discovery challenged the very foundations of Kant's philosophical approach. Hume, Kant wrote, woke him from his

“dogmatic slumber” and forced Kant to reevaluate his whole philosophical framework. Kant then made it his philosophical mission to respond to Hume’s skepticism. This became his life’s work as it required a fundamental reorientation of metaphysics and epistemology. After a decade of work this led to Kant’s publication of the epochal Critique of Pure Reason in 1781.

During the decade that followed the “first Critique” Kant published a series of major works that transformed much of how philosophy was approached. This included vitally important work in ethics that make Kant one of the most important moral philosophers.

Kant lived his whole life in Königsberg and, while he was not the bon vivant that Hume was, but rather a man of modest and regular habits, he was considered a good friend and was popular teacher. His influence was so great that during his lifetime he was called the “the sage of Königsberg.” At the time of his death he was so famous and highly regarded that his funeral was attended by thousands of people who came to pay him tribute.

Hume and Kant

The differences between Hume and Kant extend to many of the key areas of philosophical thought. These include differences regarding metaphysics, epistemology, ethics, and philosophy of religion. The difference between these two thinkers is so profound because of the difference in their fundamental philosophical orientation. Hume is a committed empiricist, following in the tradition defined by John Locke. Kant was of the view that Hume’s empiricism led to the dead end of skepticism. Skepticism is the view that it is impossible to have knowledge. Hume’s skepticism is the result of an extended argument that we cannot provide a rational justification for our knowledge claims. So-called knowledge is based on judgments that result from habit and natural inclination not rational justification. Hume admitted to his skepticism, calling it a “mitigated” or an “academical” skepticism. For Hume, skepticism is mitigated or academical because it only applies to philosophers (although, remember, at that time people we now call “psychologists” and “scientists” were considered philosophers) and other scholars. It in no way affects our quotidian existence. Hume’s core argument for this position is presented below.

Kant was deeply concerned by Hume’s skeptical conclusion. It was his view that we do in fact have knowledge. The success of science and the ambitions of philosophy both depend, Kant thought, on our ability to rationally justify our ideas. In this way his core impulse was very much like Descartes in responding to the intellectual upheavals of his time. Kant’s response to Hume was an attempt to reconstitute rationalism along lines very different from the Cartesian rationalism in which he was educated. This new “Kantian rationalism” is explained in the section on Kant.

The division between Kantian and Humean thinkers continues today. Contemporary empiricism is often derived from Hume and rationalism from Kant. While in the 220 some years since Kant’s first Critique there have been many vitally important innovations in philosophical thought (some of which we will review in the last few weeks of the semester), understanding the split between Hume and Kant is the basis for understanding the core claims of later philosophers.

2. Hume and his Fork

Hume divides all mental awareness into two categories. These are impressions and ideas. Impressions are

sensations of the outer world or feelings of our inner world. So, for example, in walking in the rain one might have the sensation of feeling damp. Or, in reading Hume, one might have the feeling of frustration. Ideas, Hume claims, are all copies of impressions. Ideas, Hume also claims, are less lively than impressions. The idea that reading Hume is frustrating is less lively or vivid than the feeling of frustration you felt when reading Hume.

Ideas are formed from impressions on the basis of memory or imagination. Memory is a more or less accurate copy, though weaker, of impressions. Imagination takes the basic ideas formed in memory and recombines them using three principles of association, namely, resemblance, contiguity, and cause and effect. Resemblance, contiguity, and cause and effect lead us to combine ideas into more complex ideas. For resemblance, you may see the same person acting in similar ways in different situations and, from this, you may form an idea of that person's character. For contiguity, you may see two people together in a variety of different places and you think they are a couple. And then, after hearing that this couple argued and no longer seeing them together, you may conclude that the argument caused them to break up.

Imagination may lead us to combine ideas in fanciful ways such as imagining a winged horse. However, fancy, Hume claims, is different from understanding. Our fancies are the product of desire or the wanderings of our thoughts. They do not reflect the actual experience of the world. Understanding, on the other hand, is the product of reason or enquiry. It is in the exposition of the operation of the understanding that Hume's distinctive contribution to epistemology is presented.

In Section IV of his *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* Hume writes, "the objects of human reason or enquiry may naturally be divided into two kinds, to wit, Relations of Ideas, and Matters of Fact." Hume goes on to explain that Relations of Ideas are those "affirmations" that are "either intuitively or demonstratively certain." He also says that "Propositions of this kind are discoverable by the mere operation of thought, without dependence on what is anywhere existent in the universe." Regarding Matters of Fact, Hume explains that they cannot be known through reason alone and that the "contrary of every matter of fact is still possible". Such assertions are never demonstratively certain and our knowledge about them is always based on experience. Reasoning about matters of fact is "founded on the relation of cause and effect."

This distinction between relations of ideas and matters of fact is called Hume's Fork because, like a fork, it has two tines.

So, for example, circles contain no straight lines, 2 2=4, or the Pythagorean theorem, are relations of ideas. The first of these is intuitively certain. The second and third can be proven, given certain assumptions, but these assumptions are typically taken as intuitively certain. These later two are demonstrations based on what is intuitively certain. Reasoning about relations of ideas is often called "reasoning a priori." "A priori" is understand as without experience. More on this with Kant.

"I get damp when it rains" or "the sun in March feels nice" are claims about matters of fact. In both cases we can imagine the contrary as being the case. They are not necessarily true. Reasoning about relations of ideas is often called "reasoning a posteriori." "A posteriori" is understand as with or on the basis of experience.

Because relations of ideas are "without dependence on what is anywhere existent in the universe" they do not tell us anything about the way world is. They simply tell us about how we must think about the world. Only our understanding based on matters of fact is informative about the world.

3. The implications of Hume's Fork

Cause and effect

Causal reasoning is fundamental to our understanding of how the world works. We negotiate our way though life by concluding that if I do such and such, that will lead to so and so happening.

Hume argues that connection between cause and effect is not "attained by reasonings a priori." Therefore, it must be a matter of fact, only knowable through experience. However, Hume argues that in our experience "every effect is distinct from its cause" and that the apparent conjunction between one event and another must appear to be "arbitrary". Due to this any notion of causation that goes beyond our particular experience of a "constant conjunction" between two events leads us only to the recognition of human ignorance. Think about throwing an object in the air. Most of the time it will fall to the ground. (What if it is a helium balloon? A healthy bird?) What does this tell us about cause and effect? Hume claims it tells use nothing other than that, most of the time, when an object is thrown in the air it falls to the ground. This is what Hume means by "constant conjunction." It does not show us that throwing the object in the air causes it to fall to the ground. It does not show us that it falls because of gravity. It simply shows us that one event typically follows another. All so-called "causation" is, empirically, mere correlation. The occurrence of one thing is accompanied the occurrence of another.

Hume concludes from this that reasoned justification of "These ultimate springs and principles are totally shut up from human curiosity and enquiry." Causal connection, has no basis in our experience of things. It is merely a connection we come to feel as we expect events that have been to conjoined to be conjoined in the future. It is a habit of anticipation. "Cause" is, therefore defined as "an object followed by another, whose appearance always conveys the thought to that other."

However, Hume goes on to argue, in Section V of his Enquiry, that in spite of the skeptical conclusions a rigorous philosophy leads us to, "Nature will always maintain her rights, and prevail over any abstract reasoning whatsoever." "Custom, then, is the great guide to human life. It is that principle alone, which renders our experience useful to us and makes us expect, for the future, a similar train of events with those which have appeared in the past." Philosophy guides us to the limits of philosophy. At these limits, the limits Hume's empiricism takes us to, we need to give up philosophy and acknowledge the limits of our knowledge.

Further implications of Hume's Fork

Hume extends the empiricist argument against our rational knowledge of cause and effect to other core philosophical beliefs. He argues that we cannot justify our reliance on inductive inference because it depends on the assumption of the uniformity of nature or that the future will resemble the past. Furthermore, we have no evidence that we have free will. All we know is that when we want something then we sometimes act so as to get what we want. We have no experience of a self or soul. We simply see the resemblance of body has to itself at different times and have vague memories of connections between our various thoughts and experiences. The external world is simply a set of ideas in our mind. We have a "vulgar belief" that things are real outside of our thoughts, but we can give no philosophical justification for it. The "vulgar belief" is so firmly held, however, that the philosophical realization that it is not a justified belief has

no effect on our firm conviction that there is such a world. That conviction is wound up with everything we do and say. Someone who denied it would be labeled insane. But that does not justify the belief.

And, similarly, there is no evidence for god or any kind of divine being. We cannot use reason alone (as in the ontological argument) to argue for the existence of god because the definition of god as a necessary being is simply a relation of ideas and relations of ideas can tell us nothing about the world. And, of course, cosmological arguments will not work because cosmological arguments depend on the concept of causation which, Hume has argued, cannot be rationally justified.

If Hume is correct, this also means that, in terms of Descartes' Meditations on First Philosophy, we are stuck at the cogito stage of the argument. I know I exist when I think about my existence. I can know the truths of mathematics and geometry. Beyond this, however, it would seem that all my so-called knowledge is subject to skeptical doubt.

Hume's academic or mitigated skepticism

So, Hume concludes:

"If we take in our hand any volume—of divinity or school metaphysics, for instance—let us ask, Does it contain any abstract reasoning about quantity or number? No. Does it contain any experiential reasoning about matters of fact and existence? No. Then throw it in the fire, for it can contain nothing but sophistry and illusion."

Hume is arguing that, for the most part, we cannot rationally justify our most fundamental beliefs. This is, in Hume's view, one of the key conclusions a rigorous empiricism leads us to. Hume's empiricism, if correct, should also serve as a warning to not try to do too much with philosophy. We should realise that we cannot prove things, like the existence of god, that we have no impressions of. What, a follower of Hume would ask, impression gave you the idea of god? And we certainly cannot use god, and the belief that god is no deceiver, to claim to prove things such as the existence of a world outside of our mind or the supposed fact that I exist as both mind and body. While each of us has firm beliefs about these things, Hume argues, belief is not the same as knowledge or reasoned understanding.

In this way Hume is a skeptic. He believes that much of what we claim to know is not rationally justifiable. It is firm belief. But we do not have the ability to know whether such beliefs are true. This is because experience does not provide reason with the tools it needs to justify such beliefs.

However, Hume also claims, at least in his Enquiry, that his skepticism is a mitigated or academical skepticism. This is because although I cannot, for example, justify my inferences employing cause and effect, I cannot help but make such inferences. We do this through habit and instinct. Philosophy cannot change this. We will continue to act on assumptions that cannot be rationally justified. This, again, does not mean that such assumptions are true. It merely means that we cannot help but believe in them. This is sometimes called Hume's skeptical solution to the problem of skepticism.

Now, having done this reading, watch the following videos where Professor Daniel Greco explains Hume's fork and applies it to two other of our fundamental beliefs:

(1) the reliability of induction and

(2) the uniformity of nature.

A YouTube element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: https://whatisphilosophy.pressbooks.sunycreate.cloud/?p=207

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(The videos are also available at http://www.wi-phi.com/video/humes-skepticism-part-1 and http://www.wi-phi.com/video/humes-skepticism-part-2)

D. Kant's Transcendental Method

1. Kant: motivations and his transcendental argument

The skepticism of the Scottish philosopher David Hume woke the Prussian philosopher Immanuel Kant from the "dogmatic slumber" of his own rationalism. Kant credited Hume with a devastating demolition of our ability to justify our knowledge claims. Because Kant was a thinker who was deeply committed to the role of reason in governing both our claims to knowledge and our ability to live worthwhile practical lives, he took it upon himself to reconstruct the foundations of knowledge after Hume's devastating demolition. In this way Kant's task was analogous to Descartes' task some 150 years earlier. Both, in the face of a crisis in our ability to determine what we can know, attempted to create a groundwork ("*Grundlegung*") on which we can build knowledge of both the theoretical world of ideas and the practical world of conscious action.

Kant's approach begins by giving due credit to the empiricist tradition's investigation into the nature and the capacities of the mind. Kant says that this investigation raises a key question: What norms can we use when we investigate the nature and capacities of the mind's ability to know the world? Kant sees two alternatives.

One is to look to the world of facts and evaluate what we know and what we can know by looking at the way the world is. Kant calls this sort of approach an external or **transcendent** (because it investigates the mind by going beyond or transcending the mind) critique. In contemporary terms, this is the approach of fields like neuropsychology and evolutionary psychology. They begin by taking our understand of how the brain or how evolution works and then use this understanding to investigate the mind. Kant is critical of this approach for two reasons. First, it already assumes that we can have knowledge of the external world. This, though, is the very question we want to investigate. It "begs the question." It assumes what we are trying to prove. Second, facts are not norms or standards of evaluation. Even if we can understand how the mind works by studying the brain, this provides no insight into how the mind *should* work. For example, understanding how the brain of a schizophrenic works provides no insight into whether the mind of a schizophrenic accurately comprehends the world. Thus, transcendent critique is not the means by which we can investigate the nature and capacities of the mind's ability to know the world.

The second approach is to use the norms and criteria of reason to investigate the nature and capacities of the mind's ability to know the world. Kant call this approach an **immanent** critique. Kant also rejects this approach because it is also question begging. You cannot assume the correct working of the mind in order to investigate whether the mind works correctly. This was part of Hume's great lesson to philosophy. If you cannot assume rational foundations for the correct functioning of mind and if you cannot discover the grounds for the mind's rational functioning in experience, then you have no way to justify our ability to know the world.

Kant sees Hume as confronting philosophy with a destructive dilemma. We can neither use transcendent or immanent critique to have knowledge. What, then, are we to do?

In logic when you have a destructive dilemma, one way to avoid the destructive consequence is to "go between the horns" of the dilemma. This means finding a third alternative.

Kant's alternative is one of Kant's many great contributions to philosophy. This is what Kant calls "a **transcendental**" critique. In a transcendental critique, you look at some essential capacity or ability and then you determine what is necessary for that capacity.

Okay, that is really abstract!

So, let's try an example.

We all have sensations. We see a certain thing at a certain time. You are, as you read this, seeing words on a screen. The capacity to have sensation is called by Kant "sensibility." Kant asks, what must be the case for you to be able to see the words you are reading on the screen? What must be the case for you to smell honey or hear the buzzing of bees? What are, to use Kant's language, "the necessary conditions for the possibility of sensibility"? This is a transcendental question because it takes a capacity we all take for granted, in this case sensibility, and then asks, what has to be true if we are to have that capacity? These kinds of questions are for Kant **transcendental questions**.

A transcendental question asks: What are the necessary conditions for … [insert here some basic capacity that we all exercise] …?

Kant asks these transcendental questions in order to solve all sorts of fundamental philosophical problems.

> What are the necessary conditions for sensibility?
>
> What are the necessary conditions for understanding (our making sense of how the world works)?
>
> What are the necessary conditions for morality? (This question leads to Kant's practical philosophy or ethics.)

Okay, so these are some of Kant's transcendental questions; what, then, are the answers?

What are the necessary conditions for the possibility of smelling the scent of honey or hearing the buzzing of bees? Kant argues that all sensation is the sensations of something somewhere and somewhen. In other words, Kant says that space and time are necessary conditions for the possibility of sensibility. To, again use Kant's language, space and time are **transcendentally real**. He goes on to call space and time "**pure intuitions**." They are pure because they are untouched by experience. Because of this they are also *a priori*, justifiable without recourse to experience.

What are the necessary conditions for the possibility of seeing the bees going from flower to beehive and seeing over the course of the summer the beehive filling with honey and then concluding that bees make honey from the nectar of flowers? What are the necessary conditions for the possibility of understanding? The details of the answer to this are quite complicated and well beyond the scope of an Introduction to Philosophy class. However, the overall approach is Kant's argument that we use categories of understanding to put together our sensations to make sense of the world. For example, you see a bee. You hear a buzzing from the place you see the bee. You make a causal inference that the bee is making the buzzing. Without the category of causation, you would never make the connection that the bee is buzzing.

Causation, then is a necessary condition for the possibility of understanding.

For Kant, understanding and sensibility go hand in hand. Together, they constitute experience.

Kant writes:

"the faculty for *thinking* the object of sensory intuition is the *understanding*"

"Without sensibility no object would be given to us, and without understanding no object would be thought by us. Thoughts without content are empty, intuitions without concepts are blind. Hence, it is

just as necessary to make one's concepts sensible (i.e., to adjoin an object to them in an intuition), as it is to make one's intuitions intelligible (i.e., to bring them under concepts)."

2. Kant and the Modern Hume's Fork

Kant describes his transcendental approach understanding as:

"the analysis of the faculty of understanding itself, so as to investigate the possibility of *a priori* concepts by seeking that possibility in the understanding alone (as the birthplace of those concepts), and by analyzing the pure use of those concepts."

What is important here is Kant's notion that the categories of understanding are *a priori* concepts. That is, knowledge claims whose justification does not depend on experience. For example, if it can be shown that causal inference is a priori, then Hume's empiricist demolition of the use of causal connection no longer works. If Kant can show that the foundational categories of understanding are justifiable a priori, then he has saved knowledge from skepticism!

If you recall from the Hume reading, at the root of Hume's skepticism is the distinction between relations of ideas (RoI) and matters of fact (MoF). Relations of Ideas are knowable without experience. They are a priori. Hume also claims that they can provide no information about how the world works. Matters of fact on the other hand, are informative about the world, but are only knowable through experience. They are posteriori. Hume argues that if causation, for example, is to be explanatory of the way the world works, it must be derived from experience. Since we cannot justify causation through experience, we are not rationally justified in using it to explain the world.

Kant's solution to this is to claim the we can have a priori ideas that can be used to understand how the way the world works. He calls these ideas "synthetic a priori."

It works like this:

Modern Hume's Fork

	A priori	***Posteriori* or Empirical**
Analytic	"All bachelors are unmarried men" **All analytic knowledge is a priori.**	**NONE**
Synthetic **or** **Ampliative**	**?** **Here Empiricists and Kant disagree** Empiricists (Hume): NO! Transcendental Idealists (Kant): YES!	"Today it is raining." **All a posteriori knowledge is synthetic.**

This chart shows a two-part distinction.

In the **left-hand column** there is a distinction between "analytic" and "synthetic" propositions. This distinction is concerned with the relation in a proposition between the subject and the predicate.

Analytic propositions are what Hume calls "Relations of Ideas." They have the logical structure of "A is A." These are identity statements.

(Remember a **proposition is: Subject/verb to be/Predicate**: All dogs/are/canids. All dogs are canids is an analytic proposition because "canid" means "kind of dog.")

Synthetic propositions are propositions where the predicate adds to what we know in the subject. An example of a synthetic proposition is, all dogs are social animals. Dogs are not, by definition, social. That is something we have learned about dogs through observation.

On to top row is the distinction between ***a priori*** and ***posteriori***, this, as I have already explained, is an epistemic distinction. It separates a priori claims that can be justified without experience and a posteriori claims that need to be justified by experience.

We can justify *a priori* the truth of the claim that all dogs are canids. Because this claim can be justified without reliance on experience everyone can know that it is true no matter what their experience is. Even if you have never seen a dog, you can justify to truth of the claim that all dogs are canids. Thus, to use Kant's claim, all dogs are canids is a **universal** truth. A priori claims are also, Kant claims, necessarily true. In other words, they cannot be other than truth. This is the same thing that Hume says about Relations of Ideas when he says that they are "certain." Certain here means necessarily true.

We need to justify *posteriori* the truth of the claim that dogs are social animals.

On the basis of these distinctions, Hume's **Relations of Ideas** are **analytic a priori**. Hume's **Matters of Fact** are **synthetic posteriori**.

Kant adds to this a third category, the synthetic a priori. **Synthetic a priori propositions are propositions where the predicate adds information to what is said in the subject (and thus are synthetic) and are justifiable without reliance on experience (and thus are *a priori*)**.

If we accept Kant's proposal, that we can justify propositions such as, "Events in the world are linked by causal relations," then we can overcome Hume's skeptical conclusions. We can justify our claims about how the world works because the foundational concepts that we use such as causation, induction, identity over time, time itself, etc. can be justified as a priori synthetic concepts.

This, however, comes at a cost.

First, though, watch the following:

A YouTube element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: https://whatisphilosophy.pressbooks.sunycreate.cloud/?p=208

(Video also available at https://www.wi-phi.com/videos/kant-on-metaphysical-knowledge/)

3. Kant's Copernican Revolution

In his great treatise, the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant writes:

Until now it has been assumed that all our knowledge must conform to the objects; but working on that basis we have never succeeded in learning anything—never added anything to our stock of knowledge—in an a priori way through concepts. So, let us now experiment with doing metaphysics on the basis of the assumption that the objects must conform to our knowledge. That would fit better with the upshot that we want, namely a priori knowledge of the objects that will tell us something definite about them before they are given to us. [Here, 'given to us' means 'presented to us in sense-experience'. If the knowledge in question were available to us only after the objects were given to us, it wouldn't be a priori, and so it wouldn't be metaphysics.] *This would be like Copernicus's basic idea: having found that he wasn't getting far with explaining the movements of the heavenly bodies while assuming that the whole flock of them was revolving around the observer, he tried making the observer revolve and leaving the stars at rest. Well, in metaphysics we can try the same idea as applied to the intuition of objects.* (*CPR*, xvi)

In the first sentence of this paragraph Kant alludes to what is often called the "**correspondence theory of knowledge**." This is the view that for our beliefs to be true and justified, in other words for them to count as knowledge, these beliefs must correspond to the way the world is. This means that truth is determined

by whether our ideas match up with the way the world is independent of our ideas. This is that view, to use Kant's language, "**objects must be legislative to the activity of knowing**." It is this view, Kant argues, that contributes to both Berkeley's idealism and Hume's skepticism. This is because it is impossible to have any idea of how the world is independent of our ideas. Ideas (And, again, remember *ideas* here are all *mental* content. Sensations are ideas.) are the means by which the world is presented to us. Thus, although we can have a notion of there being a world that is a certain way independent of our ideas of it, we have no way of knowing how that world is. In a way, this is Locke's distinction between primary and secondary qualities take to its extreme conclusion. If the way something tastes or the color it has is a product of how we experience it rather than the product of how it *actually* is, then why is this not the case for how something is shaped? In the Kantian view, because space is a pure intuition, the concept of space is transcendentally real, but we do not know whether things in the world exist in space.

In short, the correspondence model claims that we have knowledge about the world if our ideas of how the world is corresponds to how the world is. However, we can never think beyond our ideas to know how the world is. Therefore, the correspondence model leads either to Berkeley's idealism, where the world is as we think it to be, or to Hume's skepticism, where we can have no justifiable notion of how the world is.

So, in the second sentence of the quoted paragraph, Kant says, we should consider the opposite. That is, think about the object of sensibility and understanding existing as they do to the extent that they "conform to" or are determined by our ways of experiencing and understanding them. Things have shape because we think of them as spatial things. Things have identity over time because we think of them as substances. Things are causally related to each other because we use the category of causation to conceive of the relations between them. To again use Kant's phraseology, **activity of knowing becomes legislative for objects**. If this is the case, then the objective world is the world as it is structured by the synthetic a priori intuitions of space and the synthetic a prior categories of understanding. Kant calls this his "Copernican revolution."

The consequence of this that many philosophers have balked at is it makes the objective world not a mind independent world but a reason and concept dependent world. Kant calls these kinds of objects **phenomena** and the world of these objects, the world that we are aware of and claim to know, the **phenomenal** world. The world as it exists outside of our ideas is called by Kant the **noumenal** world. The objects in this world are **noumena**. We can think about how the noumena might be, but we cannot have experience or knowledge of it.

E. The Way of Ideas

The narrative of rationality that extends through the European Enlightenment from Hobbes and Descartes through the Cartesian rationalists and then, via Locke, Berkeley, Hume, to Kant, is sometimes called "the way (*dao*?) of ideas." This is because the whole tradition is focused on trying to make sense of how human beings with their peculiar faculty of *thinking* about the world in terms of *ideas* can know whether their though, their ideas, can provide them with knowledge of how the world is. This *dao* of ideas contributed to and developed alongside another *dao* that of science. Science seemed to be able to explain and, through this explanation, provide the means to manipulate and change the world. During the whole of this time, people we now call "scientists" called themselves "natural philosophers." But, some of these philosophers also asked, how can I know whether these explanations match up with how the world actually is? The way of ideas is an attempt to answer this question.

The way of ideas gives us *de*, virtue or power by educating us in the uses and the limits of reasons and experience in informing one about the world. For the most part, non-philosophers are rather naive about the relation of mind to world. They take it for granted that the world is as it appears to us to be. They assume that events must be linked causally. If you touch a hot pan it will cause you skin to burn. They assume that even though things change they remain the same thing. You are the same person you were at the beginning of the semester … even though you have changed. The way of ideas should disillusion you of such assumptions. It is a *dao* of disillusionment. It is also a *dao* that should help you to refine your use of reason, And, so far in this particular philosophical story, it is *dao* that leaves you with some choices to make.

After considering these ideas will you scurry back to your naivete and see no philosophy, hear no philosophy, speak no philosophy?

Will you be a Cartesian rationalist and rely on the existence of a perfect being to ensure that your ideas correspond to a material world that is fundamentally different from the world of ideas? And that a disciplined reason will enable you to know the world?

Or will you choose to be an empiricist? And if you are an empiricist, will you resist the siren call of Berkeley's idealism or Hume's mitigated skepticism.

Or will you embrace Kant's Copernican Revolution and become a phenomenologist, giving up knowledge of the noumena for a transcendental justification of your phenomenal knowledge.

Or are none of these alternatives palatable and you will continue the philosophical study of the question of mind and world to see whether there are alternatives to the possibilities presented to us by the way of ideas?

The choice is yours.

And, speaking of choice, the philosophers who thought their way through the way of ideas were also crucially important thinkers in another intellectual story, the story of the European Enlightenment. While Enlightenment thinkers were concerned with the problem of mind and the scientific decipherment of the ways the world works, they were also concerned with questions about the nature of human freedom, the constitution of a just state, the proper form of government, questions of the rights of women and non-Europeans and, for this class next, the question of whether life can have meaning in a scientific secularized world. Immanuel Kant was one of the most important thinkers of the European Enlightenment and he wrote a famous essay titled "What is Enlightenment?" It is to that question we will turn next, by looking briefly at Kant's essay, and then at one Enlightenment tradition that developed in response to Kant's essay.