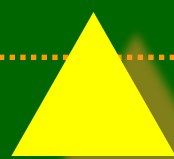




Philosophical tools

Sources of Philosophy





The Sources of Philosophical Beliefs

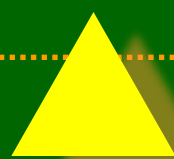
- ◆ Perception (i.e., sense-perception)
- ◆ Inference
- ◆ Intellect
- ◆ Intuition
- ◆ Authority ("authoritative testimony")

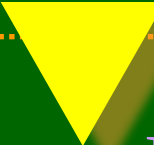


What makes a belief or proposition rationally indefensible?

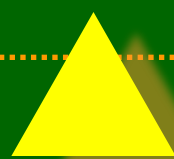
- ❖ A belief or proposition that is unreliable with itself (self-contradictory) is rationally defenseless. Any belief or proposition that is self-contradictory is not only false but necessarily so. Its truth is logically impossible.
- ❖ A belief or proposition that is inconsistent with the evidence of (common sense or scientific) experience is rationally indefensible. Any such belief or proposition is at least probably false.

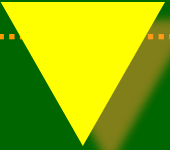
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- ◆ The rationalists had tried to show that we can understand the world by careful use of reason; this guarantees the indubitability of our knowledge but leaves serious questions about its practical content. The empiricists, on the other hand, had argued that all of our knowledge must be firmly grounded in experience; practical content is thus secured, but it turns out that we can be certain of very little

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- ◆ Kant's philosophy of knowledge requires that we frame the epistemological problem in an entirely different way. The crucial question is not how we can bring ourselves to understand the world, but how the world comes to be understood by us. Instead of trying, by reason or experience, to make our concepts match the nature of objects, Kant held, we must allow the structure of our concepts shape our experience of objects. This is the purpose of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781, 1787): to show how reason determines the conditions under which experience and knowledge are possible.
- 



Earlier, when we were considering the claim that there is an elephant in your living room,

- ❖ we appealed to sense perception in order to test the rational defensibility of that claim.
 - ❖ However, many claims (philosophical or otherwise) can be neither established nor refuted through perception because
 - ❖ they are *inferential* in nature.
 - ❖ For example, I can (& do) perceive crows, & every crow I have ever seen has been black.
 - ❖ From this perceptual experience, I *infer* that
- 



all crows are black.

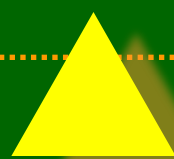
Now, even though this claim is based on perceptual experience, it cannot be evaluated through direct perception because no one can have a perception of *ALL* crows.

Instead, we must ask



IS IT REASONABLE

- to infer that *ALL* crows are black
- on the basis of our perceptions of *SOME* crows?
- I have observed hundreds or even thousands of crows, haven't you?
- They've all been black.
- So my “reason” tells me that *ALL* crows are black even though I have observed only *SOME* crows.



Is this or is this not a reasonable inference?
That is the question. What's the answer?

Here's a more philosophical
example. It pertains to a
metaphysical issue known as
“the problem of other minds.”

The question is,

are there minds other than my own?

My answer to this question is “yes,”
& I construct it on the basis of both
perception & inference.

I cannot perceive the minds of other
persons, but I can see their bodies,
and I can hear their voices.

Other people *speak* as though
they have minds, they make
facial expressions which suggest
to me that they have minds, &
their “body language” in general
leads me to believe that they have
minds as I do.

**From
these
perceptual
experiences ,**

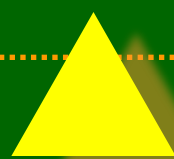


... *I infer*

- ✓ the existence of minds other than my own,
- ✓ namely,
- ✓ the minds of other people.

- ✓ This is my solution to
- ✓ “the problem of other minds.”

Now, this answer must be subjected to philosophical criticism. Is the inference I have made a reasonable one? Is it rationally defensible? What do you say?



So, philosophical claims

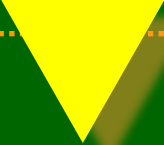
- ❑ can be established or criticized on the basis of perception (i.e., sense perception), or
- ❑ on the basis of a process of logical inference. *

Much philosophical thinking *begins* with perception; but reasoning out the logical implications of what is perceived probably plays a larger role in philosophy than does perception itself. As we proceed through the course, we may even find some philosophers reasoning in ways that owe very little or nothing to perceptual experience.



In addition to perception & inference,

- some Western philosophers & and many Eastern philosophers recognize at least ***two additional means*** by which philosophical claims can be established or criticized, namely,
 - ***intuition***
 - ***&***
 - ***appeal to traditional authorities*** (e.g. Quran Bible, the ***Vedas***, the Chinese classics, etc.).



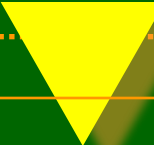
INTUITION

is the immediate, direct apprehension,
understanding, or knowing of something without the
use of discursive reasoning.

(Discursive reasoning is the process of inference, i.e., the
process of going from premises to a conclusion in a series of
logical steps.)

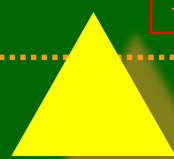
Intuition

- ◆ Intuition is a feeling or thought you have about something without knowing why you feel that way. It's a function of the unconscious mind—that you don't consciously control or perceive. It's synonymous with “hunch” or “gut feeling.”
- ◆ Intuition has a complicated role in philosophy and science. On one side, intuition is not a reliable source of information. Just because you *feel* something doesn't mean it's true!



Actually, *perception* is a form of intuition.

- Some philosophers distinguish between ***sensible (or sensory)*** intuition (perception) & ***intelligible*** intuition.
- Through ***sensible intuition*** (perception), we can know directly (i.e., without using discursive reasoning) that (for example) physical objects (such as tables) exist.
- Through ***intelligible intuition*** (intellectual perception), we can know certain things in the realm of ***ideas*** (not perceivable objects) directly & non-inferentially, e.g., that every effect must have a cause; that a proposition “A” is either true or false; that a finite whole is larger than any one of its own parts; that a perfect being cannot have any defects; etc.



(Some also claim that we have intuitional knowledge of Being, of God, of the Self, of moral truth, etc.)

Appeal to Traditional Authorities



In Indian and Chinese philosophy, another source of belief is authoritative testimony, especially as embodied in classic and/or sacred texts. Maybe we should add that to sense-perception, inference, and intuition. How, for example, do we know (if we do know) that there was a great civil war in America in the mid-19th century? None of us was there to witness it. We do not know about it through pure intuition. Nor does our knowledge of the Civil War seem to be a product of logical reasoning. We know about it mainly through the (written) work of historians, who have used the remnants of the past (documents and artifacts of various sorts) to construct accounts of “what happened then.” Even now, how do we know what is going on in Iraq or in Afghanistan? It is through the (written, radio, and TV) reports of journalists and social scientists, isn't it? Not through our own perceptions, inferences, or intuitions. It seems that much of what we know (or at least believe) arises from that kind of “authoritative testimony.”

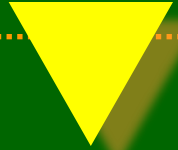
What, then, is philosophy?

- ❖ It is an attempt to figure out, on the basis of perceptual (& perhaps intuitional) experience, logical reasoning, and “authoritative testimony” – & in a “rationally defensible” way – the nature of reality, value, & knowledge. (That’s “constructive philosophy.”)
- ❖ It is also the criticism of all such attempts. (That’s “critical philosophy.”)



Today's lecture summary

- ◆ **The Process of Philosophical Thinking**
which includes constructive philosophy and critical philosophy.
- ◆ **Rationally defensible facts in Philosophy**
either from weak and strong sense.



That's all

for now