

# Introduction to Philosophy

Philosophy 110W-03  
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Chisholm  
A last bit of Descartes  
Locke

# I. Recapitulation

- We ran through a lot of material last time:
- Descartes's foundationalism, and the structure of foundational systems
- The cogito, and the rule of clarity and distinctness
- Descartes's argument that knowledge of the world comes from understanding alone, not from the senses
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- Today, we will look at Chisholm's worries about foundationalism.
- Then, there is one last topic to tease out of the *Meditations*.
- Lastly, we will start to look at Locke's response to Descartes.

## II. Chisholm's problem of the criterion

- Descartes needed a rule to distinguish the good apples from the bad ones.
- Chisholm calls the need for a rule the problem of the criterion.
- To separate the good apples/beliefs from the bad ones, we need a method.
- Methods themselves can be good or bad.
- So, the method would have to apply to itself.
- The problem of the Cartesian circle.

# Chisholm's three criteria for good methods

Borrowed from Mercier

- 1. The method for distinguishing good from bad beliefs, for anointing a belief as knowledge, should be internal.
  - ▶ We should be able to use it ourselves.
  - ▶ We are not relying on any one else's judgment.
  - ▶ We might defer to authorities, but only if we are convinced that they have such an internal method.
- 2. The method should be objective.
  - ▶ It must not be merely a feeling.
- 3. The method should be immediate.
  - ▶ It has to present as self-evident.
  - ▶ The cogito is immediate.
- Chisholm indicates that both memory and perception satisfy these criteria, p 159.

# The Chisholm Circle?

- Chisholm's criteria all seem justifiable.
- But, they seem to beg the question.
- Descartes provided a couple of vague terms.
- Chisholm has specified the criteria in more detail.
- But, Chisholm's criteria are no different in kind from those Descartes provided.
- So, how can Chisholm take himself as having solved the problem?

# III. Particularists, methodists, and skeptics

- Chisholm contrasts particularists, methodists, and skeptics.
- A methodist starts by specifying criteria, and then applies it to determine what we know.
- A particularist starts by figuring out what we know, and derives a criterion from that.
- A skeptic denies that we have any knowledge.

# Chisholm and Skepticism

- We have seen only Descartes's skeptical side. (The real Descartes is no skeptic.)
- Chisholm pairs skepticism with an argument against the dogmatism, pp 152-3.
- The skeptic's doubts are exaggerated.
- Skepticism is in fact self-defeating.
- We know some things; science is successful.
- Truth must have some explanatory value.

# Skepticism is down. Who's next?

- Dismissing skepticism does not solve the problem of the criterion.
- It just means that we need a solution to the problem of the criterion.
- To attack the problem, Chisholm contrasts methodists and particularists.



# methodists

- Chisholm calls Locke, indeed any empiricist, a methodist.
- Descartes, too, is most aptly classified as a methodist.
- For Descartes, the method is clarity and distinctness.
- For Locke, it is that everything we know must have its roots in sense experience.
- Berkeley will also be a methodist, as will Hume.
- The logical positivists pursue the same Humean project.

# particularists

- Chisholm mentions two particularists: Reid and Moore.
- Reid, p 156.
- We have some knowledge, and we must figure out the best account of it.

# Is Descartes really a particularist?

- Descartes is sort of a particularist, at the beginning of the second meditation.
- For, the cogito precedes the method of clarity and distinctness.
- But, at that point, the method becomes primary.
- So, no, he is not.

# IV. Chisolm breaks out of the Cartesian circle

Chisholm's solution to the problem of the criterion seems to beg the same question that Descartes begged.

- But, Chisholm has actually changed the question.
- By adopting particularism, he denies the whole foundationalist framework.
- We need not start with a method.
- We start with our knowledge of how to separate the good apples from the bad apples.
- We can describe that method.
- We can refine the method.
- But, we need not presume that the method itself must pass some test before we can use it.

# V. Descartes, Locke and Berkeley

- Locke and Berkeley share their empiricism, their belief that all knowledge must ultimately come from the senses.
- Locke argues directly against Descartes.
- Berkeley's concern is mainly with Locke's arguments.
- We will proceed to explore Locke's empiricism, and Berkeley's criticism.
- We need to tease just a bit more out of Descartes, first.
- The point of contention between Locke and Berkeley concerns the nature of the external world.
- We should be clear about Descartes's understanding of the world.

# VI. The nature of physical objects

- The wax is just a body which can take various forms: hot or cold, sweet or tasteless, etc.
- The wax is identified with none of these particular sensory qualities, p 107.
- The wax is essentially something which can have sensory qualities, but which need not have any particular ones.
- The wax is only extended, flexible, and movable, p 107.
- The same object may have many different appearances.
- Boyle, Galileo, Newton, and Locke all agree.
- Berkeley disagrees.

# VII. The resemblance hypothesis

- It seems that the source of some of my errors is in believing that sensory experience leads to knowledge.
- The resemblance hypothesis says that my ideas of objects resemble those objects.
- Descartes rejects the resemblance hypothesis, p 109.
- Locke defends the resemblance hypothesis.
- Berkeley does too, in an unexpected way.
- It is natural to take our ideas of objects, and the world in general, as resembling, as being like, the world as it is in itself.
- But, the ideas which really tell us about the nature of the world are the ones which are not directly derived from sensory experience.

# Against the resemblance hypothesis

- Descartes provides the example of the sun, not reprinted in Cahn
- I find in my mind two distinct ideas of the sun. One, by which it appears to me extremely small, draws its origin from the senses... The other, by which it seems to be many times larger than the whole earth, is... elicited from certain notions born with me, or is fashioned by myself in some other manner. These two ideas cannot both resemble the same sun; and reason teaches me that the one which seems to have immediately emanated from the sun itself is the one that least resembles the sun. (AT 39)
- Notice that the argument against the resemblance hypothesis are independent of the three doubts.
- We would have this problem even if the exaggerated doubts were absent.



# VIII. Solipsism

Descartes is confused at the end of our selection.

- He has arrived at a solipsistic barrier.
- Solipsism is the thesis that only I exist.
- Knowledge of the cogito seems to lead us to knowledge of mathematics.
- But the possibility of the deceiver led us to reject mathematics.

# Descartes Summary

- We saw that Descartes cited the resemblance hypothesis as a source of his errors.
- So, now we have reasons to keep the rotten apples out of the basket: the three doubts.
- We have criteria for putting good apples back into the basket: the criterion for certainty, clear and distinct perception.
- And we also have a criterion for recognizing bad apples: reliance on the resemblance hypothesis.
- Instead of relying on our senses, we should rely on our innate ideas.
- All, but only, the Class III beliefs are innate.
- Beliefs of Classes I and II are infected with problems of the resemblance hypothesis.

# End Descartes

Next up: Locke

# IX. The epistemological landscape

- Descartes was a rationalist, since he believed that there was knowledge which did not depend on experience.
- For Descartes, we had innate ideas.
- Locke and Berkeley deny that we have innate ideas.
- The empiricists try to provide a foundation for all knowledge in our sense experience.

# X. The metaphysical landscape

## Three metaphysical positions

- 1. Materialism: All reality is material.
  - ▶ The material world would have to include ideas.
  - ▶ Thus, a materialist might say that the mind is the brain.
  - ▶ Hobbes was really a materialist, though Locke was not.
- 2. Dualism: Some reality is mental, some is physical.
  - ▶ Descartes and Locke are both dualists, though we read Locke as a materialist.
  - ▶ Note that God is taken as a mental object, an infinite thinker.
- 3. Idealism: All reality is mental
  - ▶ The Idealist believes that there is no material world, just a world of thinkers and thoughts.
  - ▶ Berkeley holds this view.

# More Locke to read?

- I have put a link to Locke's *Essay* on the website.
- For the objections I will talk about, see Book I, Chapter I (the introduction), especially Paragraph 5;
- and Book I, Chapters II-IV;
- also see Book II, Chapter I.

# **XI. Criticism #1: Descartes's standard for knowledge is too high.**

- For Descartes, our knowledge of everything except the cogito depends on God.
- Indeed, without arguing for the existence of God, Descartes seemed stuck.
- In contrast, we seem to be able to know about the world around us, without knowing about God.
- Descartes is driven to his position by his claim that we must be certain of something beyond any doubt if we are to know it.
- Unless we defeat the deceiver, we know almost nothing.
- Maybe Descartes has too high a standard for knowledge.

# Locke and the standard for knowledge

- Knowledge may not require certainty.
- Knowledge does require justification, and truth.
- If we know that  $p$ ,  $p$  must be true, and we must have good reasons to believe that  $p$ .
- But, it does not follow that I must not be able to doubt that  $p$ .
- Locke does not worry about defeating a deceiver.
- He just worries about having good justifications for the beliefs he will count as knowledge.



## **XII. Criticism #2: There are no innate ideas.**

- Both Descartes and Locke defend the new science and its method of experimentation.
- The new science posits a world of material objects.
- But what are these objects like?
- We think of these objects through use of the imagination.
- For Descartes, though, these images are confused.
- They are subject to the errors of the resemblance hypothesis.
- The only real properties are those we can understand by pure reason, through innate ideas.

# Mathematical ideas

- We use reason to discover the truth or falsity of mathematical claims.
- Today, we might say that a priori ideas are learned independently of experience.
- Knowledge about the world has to have the same status as mathematical knowledge.
- But, sense experience could never live up to that.

# Contrasting empiricism and rationalism

- Neither Descartes nor Locke questions whether experience is necessary for us to have knowledge.
- The question is whether experience is sufficient to account for what we know.
- Locke says that experience alone is sufficient: all knowledge derives from experience.
- This is the definition of empiricism.

# Locke believes that the mind begins as a blank slate

- All ideas come from sensation or reflection. Let us then suppose the mind to be, as we say, white paper, void of all characters, without any ideas:”How comes it to be furnished? Whence comes it by that vast store which the busy and boundless fancy of man has painted on it with an almost endless variety? Whence has it all the materials of reason and knowledge? To this I answer, in one word, from EXPERIENCE. In that all our knowledge is founded; and from that it ultimately derives itself. Our observation employed either, about external sensible objects, or about the internal operations of our minds perceived and reflected on by ourselves, is that which supplies our understandings with all the materials of thinking. These two are the fountains of knowledge, from whence all the ideas we have, or can naturally have, do spring. (Locke’s *Essay*, Book II, Chapter 1, Paragraph 2.)