

Epistemology - the study of knowledge, belief, justification, truth

Ancient Greek philosophy asks plenty of questions about where knowledge comes from and what it means to know something...

- Socrates - Plato - Aristotle

Plato's dialogues involve conversations between Socrates and an interlocutor

Oftentimes, Plato's dialogues are named after Socrates's *interlocutor*

Plato, *The Meno*

- We enter mid-conversation, and Meno is accusing Socrates of being a “torpedo-fish”
- Socrates responds, saying he doesn't intend to confuse people, but has genuine questions....
 - o In this case, wants to inquire about virtue
- Meno presents a problem about inquiry...
 - o **Learner's Paradox**
 - Seems like there is no learning...
 - If you know, you don't need to learn
 - If you don't know, you can't learn
 - o You won't know what to look for, or when you've found it!
- Plato gives an answer to this puzzle and presents the aspects of his epistemology...
 - o Knowledge is ultimately INNATE
 - o Learning is really just RECOLLECTION
 - o The ultimate truth is eternal, transcendent, and we have an IMMORTAL SOUL that is connected to ultimate truth
 - o Recollection isn't merely remembering, and it is not “passive”
 - o Recollection involves questioning, inquiry, logic, debate, analysis, defining and clarifying the ideas... Philosophy!

Socrates tries to demonstrate this theory about recollection and inquiry with Meno's Servant Boy...

- At first the kid thought he knew... but he was wrong
- Socrates questions and confuses the boy, but in order to move him past his prideful errors and to develop a thirst for truth
- This is PROGRESS!
- And then, through questions and intellectual humility and hard work, the boy gets closer to the truth, and discovers and "recollects" answers that are right!
- Ultimately, we will be better, and braver and wiser by inquiring... by digging in and recollecting eternal truths.

Plato lived 428-348 BC

Aristotle, *Posterior Analytics*

- Though he was a student of Plato, Aristotle (384-322 BC) differed from his teacher on most things

Aristotle's Epistemology revolves around three main ideas...

- Induction
- Deduction
- Intuition

Induction - building general understanding through the senses and from particular experiences

- Sensory experience
- Memory
- Comparison/Contrast/Difference
- Experience
- *Logos*
- Understanding
- Scientific knowledge and Skill

The capacities may be innate, but learning and building of knowledge comes inductively through experience

- These experiential capacities lead to the development of knowledge about the world, premises we can use for future learning and analysis

Deduction - logical demonstration... argumentation... analysis and application

- **Argument:** a set of reasons (premises) given in support of a claim (conclusion)
- **Syllogism:** a special kind of argument that follows a pattern, attempting to establish a relationship between two things by connecting them each to a third thing

All As are Bs

All Bs are Cs

Therefore, all As are Cs

- This is a valid form of argument... its premises lead to its conclusion

All dogs are mammals

All mammals are animals

Therefore, all dogs are animals

- This is an example of that valid form, and it happens to have true premises and a true conclusion that follows from them

All cats are dogs

All dogs are rats

Therefore, all cats are rats

- This is also an example of the valid syllogism... but it has false premises and one not need to accept the conclusion as true, even though the argument is valid!

“Truth” is a property of statements... premises can be true or false. A conclusion can be true or false. “Validity” is a property of arguments. Arguments can be valid or invalid (not true or false). Validity is not the same thing as truth!

- You can have a valid syllogism that does not demonstrate something about the world, since it doesn't have true premises
- Aristotle shows you need validity AND truth
 - Validity:
 - An argument is valid if and only if
 - Its premises imply its conclusion
 - Its conclusion follows from its premises
 - By assuming its premises are true, its conclusion would have to be true
 - Truth involves whether or not the premises or the conclusion actually match up with reality

“Demonstration” involves forming logical arguments with TRUE premises that lead to knowledge about the world

Intuition - grasp of the starting-points of knowledge... of logic, of the senses, of memory, etc.