

2209177.

70%, ~~80%~~, 28.11.2022.

Keith Dowling

This assignment is written in a clear & concise style, yet, at the same time, it is very informative with sufficient detail to guide a potential reader of the chosen texts. It is ambitious in terms of providing a summary of the entire Mediations.

For completion by Marker 1:

Comments:

Here, you've run the risk of not having enough space for a developed critique, but as an annotated bibliography, your presentation of the text works well. It is good that you've related some content of Copi's text to Hume's problem of induction. Hume's claims-re: problem of induction - could have been critiqued a bit more, but, then again,

Marker's signature: this would mean dedicating

Date: 28.11.22

less space to other discussions,

For completion by Marker 2/Moderator:

Comments:

at what one discusses is always going to be at the expense of something else, and overall you

provide a clear, accessible & engaged discussion of the selected texts. I'm glad that you enjoyed

Marker's Signature:

Copi's book - I've found this incredibly helpful over the years.

AGREED INTERNAL MARK (where necessary):

An excellent book, it is.

Comment on process on arriving at agreed mark:

External Examiner's comments (if relevant)

External Examiner's Signature:

Date:

HPPH7010
Keith Dowling

"Knowledge, Reason and Reality"
Student No. 2209177

1. Annotated bibliography of C.C.W. Taylor (ed.), *From the Beginning to Plato: Routledge History of Philosophy*, Vol. 1 (London: Routledge, 2003), Ch. 2 & 3.

In Chapter Two of this book, Malcolm Schofield (pp.47-87) points out that Western philosophy began as a mixture of theological, mythological and magical explanations of the natural world. In contrast, the Milesians gave a more empirical type of account. Things are always changing. They are born, they grow, decline, and die. Nevertheless there is a core of permanence with which the change in things can be contrasted. What is it that changes? What is it that persists through the changes?¹ The Milesians came up with some disconcertingly modern answers.

Thales seems to be the first to raise questions about the nature of the basic stuff of which the world is composed. Rejecting traditional mythological or religious answers, he claimed '...that "water" is the material substrata of everything that exists' (p. 48). We have little information about the reasons which led him to this view. But they are not difficult to conjecture. Water is easily transformed into other states. Frozen it is ice, at a high temperature it is steam. It is essential to growth and generation. As Aristotle says in the *Metaphysics*, '... the seeds of everything have a moist nature'. Moreover it tallies with some modern views. Russell points out, until relatively recently '...the received view was that everything is made of hydrogen, which is two thirds water' (*History of Western Philosophy* pp 44-45).

Anaximander was not convinced that water is any more ultimate than 'earth', 'air' or 'fire'. Instead he advanced the notion of an '...originating principle of things, something he called the *apeiron*' (p. 56). This seems to be a boundless, indeterminate substance, containing every potential, from which the various different elements are generated and '... into which they are destroyed.' (Course Fragment p1) Anaximander explained the process of change we see in nature as due to the successive encroachment of one element upon another. It all takes place in a vortical movement of the basic substance. Also this vortical movement may give rise to new worlds, anywhere and at any time.

¹ Incidentally most of the Ionians also thought the world is flat. Schofield seems to think that this latter point is, philosophically, more significant.

Interesting. Could you add a bit more here.

(Again, perhaps this doesn't seem too far away from the current well-supported Big Bang theory.)

Yes,
good
point.

In response to Anaximander, **Anaximenes** was more specific, proposing that '...the first principle is **air** in eternal motion...' (p.65). Anaximenes maintained that everything else in the natural world is formed by either the condensation or rarefaction of air. 'When it is most uniform it is invisible, but it is made apparent by the hot and cold and the moist and the moving' (Fragments handout p1). Also we are told that air's rarefied forms are '...what produce fire...' and '... in its more and more condensed forms matter' (p.65). Anaximenes claimed also that the world is a living and self-regulating, organism - along not dissimilar lines to the late James Lovelock. ✓

I enjoyed Catherine Osborne's contribution to the book, **Heraclitus** (pp.88-127). She tells us that Heraclitus got rid of the difficulty of reconciling permanence and change, by denying that there is anything permanent at all; '...everything flows and nothing stays still...' Although there is an appearance of permanence, everything is in constant alteration: 'We step and do not step into the same river...' (Fragment handout p1). Nothing abides; all things are in a continual flux. Heraclitus goes further: 'It (the world) always was and is and will be an ever-living fire, catching light in measures and extinguished in measures' (p.100). Everything starts and eventually finishes in fire - only to be transmuted then into other forms and in due course to return again to fire. However Osborne advises us that when Heraclitus says: "The world, is an ever-living fire" '...(this) is only a way to say that all of its material serve as a fuel, and some parts of it are periodically alight...parts currently extinguished'(p.101). (At first blush this idea bears a resemblance to entropy theory in modern physics.) ✓

I have room for one last point. Osborne points out that according to Heraclitus there is a principle (law of nature) that underlies this constant change, he calls "the logos". The logos tells us that while things have the appearance of permanence, everything is for ever passing into its opposite; '...day (into) night; winter (into) summer; ...good to bad, pure to impure...' (p.102). So everything changes - only the universal principle, or logos, remains unaltered. Anticipating Parmenides, Heraclitus adds '...those who have listened...to the logos agree that all things are one' (p.98).

C.C.W. Taylor's (ed.) book *From the Beginning to Plato: Routledge History of Philosophy*, Vol. 1 goes on to discuss equally valuable contributions to early Western philosophy of people like

Pythagoras, Parmenides, Empedocles, Anaxagoras, Democritus and above all, the lasting contribution of Socrates and Plato. I think the book is a valuable addition to my library

2 Annotated bibliography of Descartes *Meditations on First Philosophy* - translated by D.A. Cress, Hackett Pubs.

I will give a mainly uncritical exposition of this remarkable book.

Meditation I - *Concerning Those Things That Can Be Called into Doubt*

In his quest for knowledge that is '...completely certain and indubitable ...' (p.13) Descartes determined to rid himself of every idea about which he could possibly be mistaken. He realised he had many false beliefs. So he proposed to reject '...all of those opinions where he could find there...is some reason for doubt' p.13) In other words, he uses doubt as a device with which to identify the clear and distinct ideas he had, about which he couldn't be mistaken. Firstly, he found that he could doubt knowledge claims obtained from his senses since '...the senses are sometimes deceptive' (p.14). His senses were deceived by illusory experiences; for instance, a straight pencil in a glass of water seems bent. But he was not just mistaken about the occasional illusory experience. Sometimes he believed he was awake when he was dreaming; e.g. he thought he was sitting by the fire in his dressing-gown, when in fact he was in bed, asleep. Even more worrying, he found he could doubt the functioning of his reasoning, such as the proofs he had deduced in logic and in mathematics; it is possible that '...an evil genius, supremely powerful and clever' (p.16) tricks him.

(as he will go on to explain)

It could be pointed out that Descartes concern that any particular experience he has might be illusory or within a dream depends on the fact that he can contrast these states with experiences he takes to be non-illusory or in which he is awake. If all his experiences were illusory or dreamed, he couldn't make such a contrast. (As for the evil genius hypothesis - maybe this is the best explanation of my lifelong bafflement.)

Yes - Gilbert Ryle makes a similar point.

Meditation II - *Concerning The Nature Of The Human Mind*

Descartes goes on to claim that he is left with at least one idea that he cannot doubt - namely, the fact that he was doubting. 'Is it not the very same "I" who now doubts almost everything, who nevertheless understands something, who affirms that this one thing is true?' (p.20) And since to doubt is to think, he could not

doubt that he was a thinking thing. No matter how an evil genius may try to deceive him, it cannot make Descartes think he does not think. The strategy of doubt, therefore, yields the first clear and distinct idea. 'I admit nothing else to be in me over and above the mind' (p.23). He notes that can still doubt the existence 'of material things. Because it is not '...a well-founded judgement ...that things existing outside me send ideas or images of themselves through my sense organs' (p.27).

I agree with Descartes that the awareness I have of my own conscious states seems indubitable. However given his account, Descartes needs to say how I know that you and other people have minds, or conscious states that are anything like my own.

Meditation III - Concerning God, That He Exists

Descartes realises that he has other seemingly certain ideas, such as those of '...God, corporeal and inanimate things...and other men like myself' (p.29). His idea of God is of '...a certain substance that is infinite, independent, supremely intelligent and supremely powerful, and that created me along with everything else...' (p.30). But where did he get this idea of God, a perfect being, from? Did he invent it? 'Did it come from my parents, or from whatever other things there are that are less perfect than God?' (p.32). No. His idea of God could *only* have come from God Himself. For yet another clear and distinct idea Descartes has is '...that there must be at least as much reality in the cause as in the effect'. God exists, we are told because the cause of his idea of God cannot have originated from any cause "less great than itself" (an inference which I find hardly intelligible).

Meditation IV - Concerning The Truth and the False

Descartes thinks he has not only proved that God exists but implicit in his idea of 'God as a perfect being', that material things in the world must exist. For a perfect being would not let him be deceived about the existence of material things because '...trickery or deception is always indicative of some imperfection' (p.36). In which case, how is it possible for Descartes to make any errors? He finds the answer by examining the function of his mind. We are told his capacity for thought can be divided into, firstly, 'the understanding', by which we apprehend clear and distinct ideas. While the understanding is limited, when using it we cannot err. Secondly, there is 'the will', by which we judge ideas. God has placed no restriction on our capacity for choice. However this is the source of error because we choose and make

capacity for choice

decisions about things that we do not really understand. If only we restricted our knowledge claims to clear and distinct ideas, we would not make errors

Incidentally I disagree with Descartes here. I think, following Kant, that my seeing and hearing a material thing in the external world (even with God's help) is not "...seeing and hearing the thing itself" – but a thing already interpreted and humanised by my sense faculties and concepts. ✓

Meditation V Concerning The Essence of Material Things

Descartes then argues for a theory of "essences"- that seems to be intended as a foundation for empirical research. He first examines our ideas of the properties of objects. He asks: if any of these can be known clearly and distinctly? He rules out 'sensible qualities' such as a things colour, sound, taste, sound, smell., for as we noted, we can be deceived by our senses. However Descartes found that he has clear and distinct ideas about the primary properties of material objects, their extension, number, figure, duration and motion. Also God; the perfect being, must have essential properties - like 'necessary existence'; otherwise God would not be perfect. J

I would defend Descartes' primary/secondary qualities distinction. But I think he needs Kant's help about the 'necessary existence' of God.

Meditation VI- Concerning The Distinction Between Mind and body

Descartes has argued '...there is a great difference between mind and body'(p.56). A mind thinks and a body does not; whereas a body is extended, has a shape, moves about, and a mind doesn't. But here is the problem. If they are totally different substances, how can my body produce sensations in my mind, and how can my thoughts cause physical states in my body - as apparently does happen? How is one to explain the causal interaction between mind and body? ✓

Descartes believed that he was justified, by anatomical research, in maintaining that they interact through the pineal gland. But this is to say "where" causal interaction happens, not "how". ✓ Descartes' final view is that there is no answer to the problem of interaction. It is just one of those mysteries that one has to accept. But no student of Philosophy will be satisfied with this.

Lastly I feel I owe Descartes an apology for giving such short shrift to a text that had such a profound influence on so many generations of subsequent philosophers.

Concise but informative.

3 Annotated bibliography of Barry Stroud's *Hume* (London: Routledge, 1988), 'Causality and the Inference from the Observed to the Unobserved: The Negative Phase', ch.3.

In his *Treatise of Human Nature* Hume maintains that our mental states consist of nothing but perceptions - and our perceptual experience can be classified under two headings: '...an impression or an idea...The difference betwixt these consists in the degree of force and liveliness with which they strike upon the mind...' (Stroud p.19). For example, I have a simple impression of something roundish and green coloured in front of me - in contrast with my less forceful simple idea of an apple. We are told also that we can have complex impressions and ideas. The difference is that simple impressions or ideas '...admit of no distinction or separation' (p.19). Stroud explains '...the ideas of colour, taste and smell...are simple ideas...' (p.20) So my idea of 'the bowl of fruit with the apple in it' will be a complex one. Hume adds that all of our objects of thought are limited to the above - this is the only basis for our legitimate factual claims. If there is no impression in our perceptual experience that supports a statement we make about the world, the truth of the statement should be rejected. ✓

However Hume goes on to point out that we do have some other ideas - like the proposition 'five plus seven is twelve' - where the relation of ideas are discoverable by thought. ✓ They are justified by the definitions of the terms involved. This division between 'matters of fact' and 'the relation of ideas' is known as 'Hume's fork'. ✓ All that we are justified in claiming to know is to be found in this bifurcation. It rules out a lot.

In Chapter III (pp.42-67) Stroud turns to the belief '...that all inferences from the observed to the unobserved are founded on the relation of cause and effect' (p.46). However when we say of two events A and B that 'A causes B,' this goes further than merely inspecting the two ideas. The point is: we don't have an impression of a causal power in A that brings about B; as Stroud puts it '...we never get an impression of the necessary connection between cause and effect in any particular instance of causality' (p.45). In fact, all we actually experience is the spatial contiguity ✓ of the two events A and B, and the temporal succession of A then B. For example, we see a stone striking a window that then the window shatters. The idea of 'the stone' and 'the shattering window' are contiguous and there is the motion of the stone temporally prior to the shattering of the glass. And then (somehow) we infer a necessary connection - a power in event A

(the stone hitting it) that causes event B (the shattering window). Such putative connections '...are not, and have not been, observed' (p.54). It is (wrongly) inferred merely because the events A and B are constantly conjoined; they always happen together. As a result, Hume thinks, we are left with a much weaker notion than "necessary connection". He asks: '...what leads us to believe that this particular event was caused by that particular event?' (p.51) and his answer is that it is due to our mental custom or habit of associating ideas. Our minds associate the impressions and ideas we have and we are led to assume necessary connections exist. But since all knowledge is derived from the impressions we have in experience; we have no grounds for thinking this.

Stroud is scathing about Hume's analysis here. He writes 'Despite its importance, Hume's treatment of the whole subject is perfunctory' (p.50). if Hume is correct, for instance, one odd consequence is that it is possible for '...something to begin to exist without a cause' (p.47) – the stone hits the window and then, for no reason whatsoever, the window happens to shatter. Also Stroud attacks Hume's view that all impressions and ideas which are different are '...separable ...when often all this amounts to is viewing an event '...in different aspects' (p.49). We might add to Stroud's objections the observation that two ideas can be constantly conjoined and temporally successive without our thinking that one causes the other (e.g. traffic lights on opposite sides of a road). So Hume's definition of causation fails in many ways.

We have room for one more of Stroud's points – but this time in support of Hume's analysis. We make generalisations like 'grass is green', 'fire burns', 'stones thrown at windows cause the windows to shatter', and so on. What are the grounds for claiming such generalizations are true? Most of them are inferences built upon the assumption that the present and the future will be like the past. We assume nature is uniform. As Stroud writes: '...every inference from the observed to the unobserved is founded on the supposition that the uniformity principle is true' (p.55). But Hume asks: Is this warranted? He writes: 'If there be any suspicion that the course of nature may change, and that the past may be no rule for the future, all experience becomes useless, and can give rise to no inference or conclusions' (p.54). And Hume points out that nature may not be uniform - any 'matter of fact' may change - so none of our generalisations are justified!

Stroud spends some time criticising commentators who think that Hume assumes here that every inference '...needs to be deductively valid in order to be a good one or to justify the belief in its conclusion' (p.57). But clearly, many of the things we believe, while not deductively valid, are well-supported, reasonable or sound. Stroud says that this criticism (of assuming that only deductively valid arguments are acceptable to Hume) is unfair. He takes Hume to be saying that every inference from the observed to the unobserved is such that only one counter instance will prove the generalisation false. And there is always this possibility. So Hume's critics should see, Stroud writes, '...there might well be more to Hume's negative argument' (p.67).

Stroud goes on to show how our everyday beliefs in external objects (pp. 96-117) and personal identity (pp.118-140) suffer from Hume's sceptical approach. I want to note, lastly, how much I enjoy reading this informative and critical book.

Hume - realist about causation, maybe. But wants to say that we can not make any knowledge claims about it.

4. Annotated bibliography of Irving M. Copi's *Introduction to Logic*, New York: MacMillan 1965.

We want our reasoning about reality to be sound, to follow reliable methods of sifting truth from falsehood and to help us to form correct beliefs about the world. Copi's very good book *Introduction to Logic* identifies many of these reliable methods of reasoning; many of the rules and techniques of clear thinking.

In the first part (pp 3-122) he has a good discussion of the common errors that occur (vis. fallacies) - even in philosophical thought and argument- a discussion too often neglected in books of this kind.² Copi gives good examples and explanations of fallacies like ad hominem arguments, (p.55), arguments from ignorance (p.57), appeals to authority (p.61), of begging the question (p.65), amphiboly (pp 91-94), and many more. And as students of philosophy we need to be aware of them. One example will have to suffice. Heraclitus' use of the expression '*the same river*' (above) is ambiguous: As the Lecture handout p.8 notes: '...it can mean (a) a stream of fresh water flowing along a definite course from source to outlet....and it can also mean (b) the same body of water comprising precisely the same molecules'. So

²See e.g. W. Hodges *Logic*, Harmondsworth: Penguin Books (1977); E.J. Lemmon, *Beginning Logic* London: Thomas Nelson Ltd (1965)

under description (a) we can step into the same river twice. Under description (b) we cannot.³

In the second part of his book (pp.133-327) Copi gives a good overview of deductive reasoning. He shows how the logical form of an argument is often blurred or concealed by the way the argument is expressed in ordinary language. He then explains how the logical form of some ordinary language statements (pp.198-234) can be expressed symbolically (pp. 253-260). And how the truth of their occurrence in more complex argument forms can be summarised in truth tables. Roughly and briefly, we must assume that every simple proposition is either true or false (i.e. 'questions', 'commands', etc. do not count as propositions). When these simple statements are connected into more complex propositions by terms like 'and', 'either...or', 'if ...then', 'not' we can use truth tables to show how the truth or falsity of the more complex statement depends upon the truth or falsity of its component simple statements.

Then using the notation of propositional logic – and using some intuitively obvious rules of inference – Copi goes on to how we can deduce further valid conclusions from many of the assumptions we make; this is to say, by using the rules of propositional logic, we can deduce some of the logical consequences that result from the propositions we assume to be true. As students of Philosophy, we need to pay attention to this. For instance, Gettier (Lectures 5 & 6) shows how, when we argue for the standard definition of 'knowing that p', we overlook at our peril the implications for this definition when certain true conjunctions or inclusive disjuncts are added to it. Copi's (p.225) also includes a short discussion of the intuitively true argument form *modus ponens*, that shows that if we assume the truth of $P \text{ and } (P \supset Q)$, we are committed to the truth of Q. Again mistakes in philosophical reasoning sometimes occur using this rule – especially when, as Copi (p.225) notes, one '...affirms the consequent, rather than the antecedent of a hypothetical premiss and then infers the antecedent as a true conclusion'.⁴

One shortcoming of propositional logic is that it deals with simple, well-formed propositions: 'All person are philosophers' and "Some particular individual is a philosopher' will come out looking alike. Each is an example of the proposition P. We need get

³ R Humphreys lecture notes for Session One (p8) .

⁴ See e.g. Bernard Suits (1978) *The Grasshopper: Games, Life, and Utopia*

inside the proposition to understand how they mean and imply quite different things. Also ordinary language is good at generating ambiguities and sometimes we need to break inside a proposition to resolve them. In his account of predicate logic Copi gives a fairly clear discussion (pp.302-327) of the tools we need for this.

Formal logic may be great for telling us what we can deduce from sets of premisses that we assume to be true. But in Philosophy, we need to know that the assumptions we make and use in arguments are true. And often arguments are criticised because their assumptions are controversial - and sometimes not very sensible. We need a way of arriving at premisses that are, at the least, sensible.

Copi deals with this in his discussion of inductive logic (pp.337-479). In everyday experience various generalisations seem to be reasonably uncontroversial; like 'grass is green', 'fire burns', 'water refreshes'... They seem to meet our desideratum for sensible propositions about the world. When generalisations like the above are drawn from experience, however, they are taken to be true of all similar experiences in the future. And there is always a chance that the generalisation we make will turn out to be false. (As we noted, this is what bothered Hume.) Even so, there are techniques that can help us make our inductive inferences as sound as possible. ✓

Well-supported
Copi discusses some of these techniques; ways in which we can feel confident that our generalisations are as strong as they can be. He writes, for instance: 'Most of our own everyday inferences are by analogy' (p.338). Where two things A and B are alike in several respects and one, the thing A, is known to have some further property, it is reasonable to infer - by analogy - that B also has this property. Sadly in Philosophy, as in everyday life, some of our analogical inferences are false. However Copi gives us techniques for ensuring they are as sound as can be. Also we make a great many of the inferences about causal connections. (Another worry for Hume we noted earlier.) Copi gives a good discussion of Mill's Methods for establishing that a claim about an actual causal relationship is sound. Along with other techniques for creating sound inductive reasoning, Copi goes on to discuss good scientific reasoning (pp.416-478) and probabilities (pp.474-479). ✓

Well supported
Yes. The conclusions will be more probable than not.
To sum up, in his *Introduction to Logic* Copi gives a clear account of many of the tools we can use when we think about the knowledge we have of reasoning and about reality. ✓

The term 'sound' is used for valid deductive inferences with true premisses. For inductive ones, more accurate to 'well-supported' or 'more reliable', rather than sound.

