

## PHIL 20C Week 1 Glossary

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**Aristotelianism:** a way of doing science, now by and large archaic, that explains the events of nature in terms of essences and final causes.

**Cognitive Faculty:** an ability of one's mind, by means of which one can understand the mind. For instance, the ability to reason. Also called a 'cognitive power'.

**Concept:** when we say that you has a concept of something, this just means that you can think about that thing. Concepts can either be imagistic or non-imagistic.

**Descartes, Rene:** the mathematician, scientist, and great Rationalist philosopher who wrote several important philosophical works, including the *Meditations on First Philosophy*. Hobbes disagreed with him on many points, including the existence of the intellect, the existence of an immaterial soul, the sources of our concepts, and much more.

**Description:** a phrase in language of the form "a/an/the x such that F", e.g. "The dog that barked", "A cat that meows", "An element that trumpets". Using descriptions, we are able to think and talk about things that we have no mental picture of. In other words, by using descriptions we are able to possess non-imagistic concepts.

**Empiricism:** a family of philosophical theories that maintains that all, or most, our or concepts and knowledge come from the senses. Empiricists deny the existence of the intellect.

**General Term:** a phrase in language that names a kind of thing, rather than a particular thing, e.g. "Dog", "Cat", or "Elephant". General terms allow us to refer to groups of things. Since no two members of a class resemble each other exactly, one can't have an image that represents an entire class of things - any image would represent only a single member of that class. For example, an image of a dog only represents that dog, and no other dog. For this reason, when we are able to use a general term, this means we have a non-imagistic concept of the kind of thing the general term is about.

**Hobbes, Thomas:** the scientist, political theorist, and great Empiricist philosopher who wrote such books as *Human Nature* and *Leviathan*. He was a contemporary of Descartes. He wrote on many different subjects and had a distinctive philosophical system. In philosophy 20C, we are studying his epistemology, psychology, and ethical/political theory.

**Idea:** another name for an imagistic concept

**Imagination:** the cognitive faculty that stores, recalls, and manipulates information received from the senses.

**Imagistic Concept:** a sort of mental picture that the mind uses to think about particular things. When the mind thinks 'in pictures', it is thinking with imagistic concepts. The mind develops an imagistic concept of a thing when it sees that thing, and stores a picture of it in the mind.

**Intellect:** a cognitive faculty proposed by Rationalists, distinct from the senses and the imagination. Rationalists believe the existence of the intellect explains why we can think with non-imagistic concepts. Empiricists deny the existence of the intellect and claim that language is responsible for our possession of non-imagistic concepts.

**Mechanistic Explanation:** according to the 'New Science' of the 17th century, scientific explanation is the explanation of the movement of material objects over time. For instance, if I drop a rock and it hits the ground, a mechanistic explanation for that event will appeal to the law of gravity. This stands in opposition to the older Aristotelian idea that science explains events in terms of things such as natural purposes.

**Non-Imagistic Concept:** a concept for which there is not, and perhaps could not be, a 'mental picture'. We possess non-imagistic concepts because we are able to use language, which possesses descriptions and general terms.

**Rationalism:** a philosophical theory which claims that we are able to learn fundamental truths about the universe through the use of the intellect. Rationalists believe that we have innate concepts and knowledge, i.e., concepts and knowledge that we are born with.