

HISTORY OF ANCIENT PHILOSOPHY II (PHIL 146) NOTES

17/02/2025

Monday

Introduction regarding Plato. General overview of what is to be expected.

21/02/2025

Friday

Meno's Paradox: Knowledge

The centre of discussion in Meno's dialogue: What is virtue? Is virtue acquired by birth or taught?

After getting refuted numerous times by Socrates, instead of trying to pursue the conversation, Meno begins to express his opinions on his dialogue with Socrates, at which point he feels perplexed, as if under a spell by Socrates due to being questioned after everything he puts forward and finding out he doesn't know shit, even though he has given numerous speeches on virtue in front of big audiences.

80d-e ← Meno's Paradox

Meno's Argument:

"You can't search for something you don't know at all, you wouldn't know what to look for."

"Even if you stumble on it, you wouldn't be able to recognize it, you wouldn't be able to identify it as the thing you've been looking for."

Socrates' Response:

"Do you realize what a debater's argument you are bringing up, that a man cannot search either for what he knows or for what he does not know? He cannot search for what he knows—since he knows it, there is no need to search—nor for what he does not know, for he does not know what to look for."

-Either you know what you look for, or you don't know.

-If you know, you can't search (because you already know).

-If you don't know, you can't search (because you don't know what to look for).

^ Search (inquiry), is either unnecessary or impossible.

24/02/2025

Monday

Socrates counters Meno using the “**recollection theory**” ^{81a-e}

It may be our first time in this body, yet it isn't our first time in this world. One's soul has been wandering around the underworld since eternity, as they are immortal.

“Our souls have seen all things that is here and in the underworld, there is nothing which it has not learnt, and it is no surprise that it can recollect the things it learned before.”

“What humans call learning is recollection.”

“As the soul is immortal, has been born often, and has seen all things here and in the underworld, there is nothing which it has not learned; so it is in no way surprising that it can recollect the things it knew before, both about virtue and other things. As the whole of nature is akin, and the soul has learned everything, nothing prevents a man, after recalling one thing only—a process men call learning—discovering everything else for himself, if he is brave and does not tire of the search, for searching and learning are, as a whole, recollection.”

The Slave Boy Experiment.

*Refik knows what Socrates knows
Socrates knows what virtue is
What Socrates knows: that virtue is XYZ*

Refik knows that virtue is XYZ ← false

They know different things
(The fallacy of equivocation)

28/02/2025

Friday

Meno's Paradox: How does it connect to the recollection theory?

a priori / a posteriori

The fact that one has to go through an experiment to find out a truth doesn't show the innate nature of that truth (if it is a priori or a posteriori)

Possible Exam Question: *How can one utilise the distinction between a priori and a posteriori to show the fallacy of Meno's Paradox.*

03/03/2025
Monday

- (1) 329c-351d ← discusses with several arguments (The unity of virtues)
(2) 351d-end → intellectualism (which will lead to the unity of virtues) - hedonism

1 - **[Homeric Virtues]**

- *wisdom
- *temperance
- *justice
- *courage

^ *the four cardinal virtues (at the centre of discussion)*

Are these virtues all the same (*different names for one single virtue*), or are these names designate different things?

Gold-Face Analogy

If the latter is the case, then all virtues must be unlike each other, both in themselves and in function. **(Face)** ← **Protagoras' claim.**

(a) - Justice and piety have different natures

- "Justice" = "being just" as a property
- "Piety" = "being pious" as a property

virtue (color)
piety(red) justice(blue)

Socrates doesn't agree with this. As he says "When you are being pious, aren't you also just?", and vice versa.

Socrates:

Justice implies piety
Piety implies justice
P ↔ J

C: They are not different properties

(b) - Whatever is done in a *certain way* is done from a *quality*.

- Whatever is done in the *opposite way* is done from the opposite *quality*.

- For each thing that can have an opposite, there is one opposite, not many.

- Foolishness (asophrosune) actions' are opposed to wise actions: one is done from folly, the other from wisdom.

- But foolish actions are also done in a way opposed to temperate actions: one is done from folly, the other from temperance.

07/03/2025

Friday

absent

10/03/2025

Monday

Watch the videos

2 positions regarding knowledge in terms of pain and pleasure.

Knowledge in relation to emotions and pleasure/pain.

p782

Socrates asks if emotions control humans rather than knowledge, as in knowledge being a slave of emotion.

He then refutes this and defends knowledge, saying it isn't impotent.

The akrasia problem: The experience of being overcome by pleasure (or pain), and fail to do the best thing when one knows what it is.

akratic person

Socrates believes that there is no such thing as the akrasia problem.

Socrates argues that to understand the akrasia problem, one must first understand what it means to be overcome by pleasure.

Goes into the relation of immediate benefit/harm and the long term effects of such things, smoking
→ gives pleasure → causes cancer

surgery

→ gives pain → results in health

immediate pleasure is not bad, the long term results are bad, thus they are considered bad, vice versa with the other.

If you call the very enjoyment of something bad, it is either because it deprives you of a greater pleasure, or because it brings about more pain than the pleasure it provides.

The conclusion he arrives is this: pleasure and pain are the criteria to consider things as good or bad.

Socrates says there is no such thing as akrasia to commit, thus his argument isn't normative.

Human beings, knowing bad things to be bad, do them all the same, being overcome by pleasure.

Socrates argues that as akrasia is an inconsistent state of mind, it can't exist (as it is illogical to be doing both good and bad thing at the same time).

What appears to be akrasia is the absence of knowledge, as one who truly believes something to be bad wouldn't indulge in it, meaning they don't know it is bad even if they argue that they do.

Socratic intellectualism – self evident truths ← *important part*

Self-evidence and truth are different things, “*I think, therefore I am*” ← this statement may be true, yet it isn't self evident as thinking does not directly relate to existence, without proper explanation it wouldn't be evident.

14/03/2025

Friday

Socratic Intellectualism

VIRTUE IS KNOWLEDGE

HOW IS ALL THIS RELATED TO THE DISCUSSION ABOUT COURAGE AND THE UNITY OF VIRTUE

Knowledge runs a person, so do the virtues.

17/03/2025

Monday

PHAEDO for further reading: <https://iep.utm.edu/phaedo/>

Death of Socrates

Recollection Theory (slave boy)

Socrates is not an empiricist

Recollection difference between similar and different things (p64)

You cannot perceive similarity without perceiving difference.

Resemblance

similarity ↔ difference

The Equal itself

perceptible equals(things)

the equal itself

the equals themselves

^

deficiently equal

Cambridge change – change in relation to something else while the subject itself doesn't undergo any change – Plato^{??} thinks this is real change

relational properties

the two stick example and the belonging of the quality of equality, what does the relation of equality belong to?

Things change their properties but properties themselves do not change

21/03/2025

Friday

Class on oligarchies of ancient greece. Go figure.

24/03/2025

Monday

Had a stomach ache, couldn't attend class.

28/03/2025

Friday

My stomach got worse, couldn't attend again.

31/03/2025

Monday

Religious Holiday

04/04/2025

Friday

Religious Holiday (extended for reasons unbeknownst to mankind)

07/04/2025
Monday

Fucking finally.

Plato is not an empiricist.

Equal/sensible/perceptible things are deficiently equal.

Deficient equality → Not in mathematical sense.

Cambridge change – Cambridge properties
→ Plato thinks this is *real* change.

The equal itself is the relation of equality itself.
→ The red and the equal.

Deficiency of the perception of things

→ The intellectual grasp is never given in perception, the knowledge of an object is not given in this life, perception itself starts in this life.

There is a need for prior knowledge.

No object displays its perfect form in perception.

If that is a **prior knowledge**, then the life we learn it in must be a **prior life**. *Ultimately this is the theory of recollection.*

One can **never** grasp a **perfect object in perception**, as the perfect isn't given in this life, one must have prior knowledge for it.

14/04/2025
Monday

Plato is not an empiricist, he has an idea of perception.

-We have knowledge of the Forms. **Ex:** *the Equal itself*.

→ This knowledge is not to be explained as given to us in perception because

a) In so far as things given to us in perception fall short of being the corresponding Form, *the knowledge of Forms is **different** than the perception of sensible things.*

b) Consequently, the object of the *knowledge of Forms* is **not given** (it is not to be found) in **perception**.

c) Consequently, **this knowledge** is **not originated in perception**.

PLATO IS NOT AN EMPIRICIST

Socrates was looking a theory of causes. (Why are thing the way they are?)

The distinction between **Tallness** and **tallness-share**

There is the situation of conflicting properties.

The first version of his theory was naive and simple.

Moral qualities are external and objective qualities that are had by things, just as height, size, weight.

If you can find out a way of explaining these things, then you can apply the same principle to moral qualities.

This is the **naïve** version of his theory.

Socrates was **looking for** when he first started studying natural philosophy was the cause of **why things are the way they are**.

The natural philosophy disappointed him.

Socrates' renounced that the idea of explaining properties of things in terms of physical features they have.

For you to be taller than something else you need to have the quality of tallness.

Length encodes both, since anything is taller and shorter at the same time.

Therefore length, the physical determinate, cannot tell whether something is tall or short.

Physically, everything is everything at the same time. (*The example of shortness and the tallness occurring at the same time.*)

As physical things cannot separate qualities, the need for forms arises.