

## PHIL 321

### Lecture 18: Aristotle's *Posterior Analytics*, 1.1-3, 2.19

10/29/2013

#### Aristotle and Meno's Paradox

A begins the *Posterior Analytics* by claiming that all teaching and learning result from previous knowledge (in the translation, it says "cognition," but the word is "*gnôsis*," which is cognate also with "knowledge")

- For deduction: to come to know the conclusion of a deductive argument, you must know the premises
- For induction: to come to know the universal claim, you must know the particulars

Recall Meno's paradox: [P1] Either you know X or you do not know X

[P2] If you know X, you cannot inquire into X

[P3] If you do not know X, you cannot inquire into X

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[C] You cannot inquire into X

To dissolve this paradox, A introduces a distinction between two ways of knowing a given proposition P that is about a particular (kind of) object

- Knowing P universally: i.e. knowing a more general proposition that P falls under
- Knowing P without qualification: knowing the particular proposition P itself

So, A dissolves the paradox by denying [P2] and [P3]: you can inquire if you know in one way but don't know in another (question: how do we know the more general proposition?)

#### A's account of *epistêmê*

A states his definition of *epistêmê* at the opening of Ch. 2

In *Prior Analytics*, A defines a *syllogism* as: "A discourse in which, certain things being stated, something other than what is stated follows of necessity from their being so" (24b19-20)

In *APo* 1.2, A posits six conditions that the premises of a *sullogismos* must meet for it to count as a demonstration (*apodeixis*):

- [1] true: can't know what's false
- [2] primary: if there were more fundamental facts than the premises, true *epistêmê* would require going back to the most fundamental
- [3] immediate: this seems to amount to the same as [2]
- [4] better known than: you can't "bootstrap" your way up to a more secure grasp of the conclusion than the premises

- [5] prior to: can't be explanatory without being prior
- [6] explanatory of: follows from definition of *epistêmê*

[1]–[3] are all properties of the premises themselves, [4]–[6] are relational properties that the premises must bear to the conclusion (i.e. what fills out the “than,” “to,” and “of” is “the conclusion”)

## The seeds of skepticism (Ch. 3)

A imagines two different groups, each of whom accept that knowledge requires demonstration, but differ in that one group says this makes knowledge impossible, the other possible

- Impossible: Either demonstrations must go on *ad infinitum* or stop at some point. Either way, knowledge is impossible because:
  - *Ad infinitum*: Finite mind can't grasp an infinite chain
  - Stop: There is no demonstration of the principles and, hence, no knowledge of them
- Possible: Allow circular and reciprocal demonstration

A rejects this by saying that not all knowledge is through demonstration. Knowledge of the first principles is indemonstrable. Two possibilities for this:

- [A] There is a genuine kind of *epistêmê* that does not require demonstration
- [B] *Epistêmê* does require demonstration, and so knowledge of the first principles does not count as *epistêmê*, strictly speaking

A opts for [B] and claims that we have *nous* (“intuition,” “comprehension”) of first principles

## Knowledge of first principles (2.19)

The above discussion clearly shows that A needs some story about how we come to know first principles

He rejects both the idea that knowledge of the principles is innate (sorry Plato, but how could we have knowledge that is “more exact” than the knowledge of demonstrable facts without being aware) and the idea that we can come to know them from a complete blank slate. So, he concludes we must have some potentiality or power to acquire them which is activated through the appropriate stimulus

At bottom, A says it is our perceptual faculties (broadly construed) that give us the potentiality: perception → memory → experience → (knowledge of a) universal

A calls this process “induction”