Radical Empiricism for the Development of Plato's Theory of Ideas

Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679) is a rationalist that talks about sense. He thinks the senses are responsible for knowing about objects and the relations of our minds to objects. We sense things and take action by physical impulse. For example, Hobbes thinks that we move because of things external to us that we sense and react to. When we see an apple, we want to eat it. Thus, ideas we have of certain tastes of foods like an apple and the colors of things such as an apple are connected to the sense datum. We taste things and our eyes see things and we attribute certain properties to the things themselves. When we see an apple, we link sweetness to its taste because of what we have experienced in the past and thus believe that the next time we taste an apple it will be sweet. How do we know this will be the case? We don't know this for certain. This is called Hume's Problem of Induction. We don't have the power to definitely know the future. What we do instead is to take action and develop a hypothesis and wonder what things will happen when we relate the apple to our minds. In this case, if we eat an apple, we hypothesize that it will be sweet because of past experiences eating an apple. We have also observed that it is red and round in shape and can still observe these things to be true. Hobbes reminds me of Plato and Freud. Plato thinks that the mind contains ideas and the relations of the contents of our minds are relative to other minds. The color of the apple is red and it tastes sweet and has a round shape. We have different ideas about the apple. A Christian might think that an apple is related to Adam's original sin in the Garden of Eden. An Atheist might think about what to eat for breakfast. We can call an apple an apple because it has definite and indefinite relations to our minds in the sense that we associate ideas of an apple to other ideas that describe it. The human mind associates things that exist. It is in the nature of minds to think that the things we sense are in the world. This is why the faculty imagination is practically important for the ego. It allows us to associate ideas. I think that one way to view association is through cognitions, streams of thought that pop up in the mind and are connected to the body. The body is the foundation for feeling emotions and for Freud there were certain ways to quell these ideas. Say you look in the world and see many things that exist in relation to yourself and what you believe. I think Freud would say that the ego is the one thinking and the superego is the same one that is believing and rationalizing. Is Freudian psychology spiritual? I think so because the mind is an energy system that has karma flowing all around it. Jucunda!

Hobbes's Leviathan contains Latin phrases that have a religious tone. Where do words come from? Cadmus, Son of Agenor, King of Phoenicia, was the first human we have record of who brought letters into Greece. Hobbes is big on the relation of numbers to words and gives an example of how we count with our fingers. Hobbes think that we can use numbers to explain our language and I think this is true because in general we describe our experiences by referring to more than one thing. It always takes three to make up a whole. For example, the number 4 is the sum of 2 + 2 but by itself it is still 4. Does 4 exist only because of 2? We all know that since the times of the ancient Greeks the logos were a quantifier of logic, speech connecting to words and flailing about because of reason. I think love has something to do with this relationship. Can we reason without speech? Yes. Do we reason without speech? Yes. In both cases we see there are consequences to our actions. That is to say, we can use or abuse our words and have positive or negative effects on the mind. The philosophers are different from the men and women of science because they care about justice in relation to ethics. Scientists care more about proving truths about the world and why they are not the same things as falsehoods. In my opinion, Hobbes is right when he says that the appetites, aversions, and passions affect our language, perception, and experience.

In science, we want to explain the relations between deduction, induction, and hypothesis. The American philosopher Charles Sanders Peirce does a great job making distinctions between these three terms and how they all relate to the syllogism and he does this by showing two premisses and a conclusion. When we say that there was a man named Enoch, we mean that he is a biblical character and that he is a mortal like all men. The rule is the premise, "Enoch is a man." The case is "All men are mortal" and the Result is "Enoch is a mortal." This is true not only because he was a character in the bible but because there are other men who are humans like Enoch. When we think about philosophy, it's important to create reasons why things make sense in terms of language and not just experience. Thus, Peirce saves Hobbes from radical empiricism. Peirce is a pragmatist which means that he thinks that actions have intentions and consequences, namely, that thought and habit share many relations that we can all refer to to say why something we believe is true or false or somewhere in between. In general, when we think about philosophy, the main difference between itself and science has to do with word meanings. We can't strictly define words like good and evil unless we bring our opinions in to the picture. This is why Hobbe's philosophy is interesting, it allows us to speculate and question why reasoning has anything to do with the body and its habits.

The mind is clearly a different entity than the body thus I think that subjectivity has mostly to do with our minds while objectivity is concerned with our bodies. In other words, you can see me think and act and behave in certain ways but my perception of myself will always be different because I have a mind. Yet I can relate to what you are saying because of observation. Like for example you say, "Tommy, you behave in such and such a way whenever you're reading the Leviathan." And I reply and say to you, "True" or I may say "False" because I either agree or disagree with what you think about me. Peirce was the greatest of philosophers and the wisest of men and one of my pursuits in my life is to study his philosophy during the late nineteenth century and explain some of the ways that we can use it in order to enlighten ourselves about our minds and the relations we all share in reality. For Hobbes, the idea of good contained a degree of promise in it and there were desiring ends to effects, objects had utilities. You see an apple and know that you should eat it because of experiences that you've had in the past when you had an apple. And Peirce might say, when you eat the apple, perhaps you think of Adam and his original sin in the Garden of Eden, "sin" meaning a concept that relates to God and the rewards or punishments you think you will receive at some time in this life or the afterlife. In my opinion, there is no such thing as an afterlife. The main reason we all believe in it is because there is a lot of evil in the world, effects that harm us in unpleasant ways as Hobbes said, and much of these evil effects are concerning speech and the way we use words when referring to experience. Thinking is a mechanism to position ideas in the mind in the proper ways in order for us to connect words and explain the practical utility of our habits, both of the mind and body. Imagine if we had no memory. There probably wouldn't be any truth to experience and universal concepts like mind, reality, and perception in relation to experience. The benefits of categories are never ending and we can always thank of Kant's thinking to express just how important it is to group ideas in certain ways so that we can demonstrate concepts about mathematics. Hobbes wondered where words like nothing, infinite, and subtraction came from. Peirce's Theory of Probable Inference explains that there are general characters of deduction, induction, and hypothesis which are classifiable because of the copula of inclusion, "is."

Like Ludwig Wittgenstein, Peirce thinks that the main characteristic of the relation of inclusion is that it is transitive, that is, it can change because of what is in the subject and predicate connected by the word, "is." If A is B and B is C, then A is C. In Barbara we have a Rule, a Case under the Rule, and the inference of the Result of that rule in that case. For example:

Rule. All men are mortal,

Case. Enoch was a man;

Result. Enoch was a mortal.

For some reason, Peirce thinks the cognition of a rule is not conscious but is of the nature of a habit, acquired or congenital. Acquired means we can acquire knowledge from habits such as reading and also from beliefs from sources outside of our minds and in the world, such as by being told by our parents who Enoch is. Bertrand Russell says that we can acquaint ourselves with things outside of us and use descriptions to explain our acquaintances. We could have seen and heard Enoch if we lived in the times of Noah and the Arc and said "I know Enoch. He is the great grandfather of Noah." This is the study of genealogy, human lineage and how we are all connected. Congenital is like a condition existing at or before birth regardless of some cause. The point here is that we just simply know that all men are mortal and thus Enoch must be mortal as well.

The cognition of a case, in this instance, how Enoch was a man, is of the general nature of a sensation; that is to say, it is something which comes up into present consciousness since we can explain Enoch's existence in terms of truths and falsehoods by reference the sense datum. I observed Enoch do some particular action and infer that he must exist.

The cognition of a result is of the nature of a decision to act in a particular way on a given occasion. (ELEMENTS OF LOGIC, THEORY OF PROBABLE INFERENCE, see his paper on "How to make our ideas clear." [Vol. 5, bk. II, ch 5.]. For example, Enoch, like all humans, must have ate an apple in his life time. Like Hobbes, I think that Peirce wants to refer to the body so that he can justify why the mind imagines things through actions. Like we can say that in point of fact, a syllogism in Barbara virtually takes place when we perform an action like irritate the foot of a decapitated frog but only because of our imagination since we don't dissect any human beings to see the syllogism Barbara if Barbara is a faculty.

What does Peirce mean by this? "A syllogism in Barbara virtually takes place." I think he means that Barbara is a type of cognition that we have, that our mind generates when we perform certain actions like dissection, and it does this by associating and assimilating ideas to what the body does and creates a syllogism. Peirce was a physiologist. The physiologist studies the connections of the body and mind and explains "how" the connections make up a habit of the nervous system, which can be thought of as a rule of action, the physiological foundation of the major premiss, "All men are mortal." Yet why is the human mind's attention on the frog while we are dissecting it and not on something else? Imagination! This question has something to do also with our psychology if we observe the physiological form of the frog and see it has sensations, which logically speaking, is the occurrence of a case like Enoch the man.

Think of it like this, there are neural synapses, neurons, being fired from the brain of the frog to its limbs like when Descartes pulled his foot from the fire because it was hot. Why do we act onto things? Because of minds or bodies? We use tools to stimulate our nerves. But even if we were not using the tools animals like the frog could move on its own. This is a volition. Are volitions physiological or psychological? If Peirce had to pick one he would say they are psychological. I would say physiological. For Peirce, logically this is the inference of a result since we know the frog would move these limbs with or without us.

The main goal of the mind is to understand both how and why things in our visual field are true because of observation. If Peirce met Kant he may have said, "Your idea that the understanding is a faculty is a great one because we have habits that can be seen in a syllogism like Barbara.

Habits are definitely involved with understanding how all men are mortal. We observe the same habits as when people eat apples and have dreams. Second, we have emotions and feelings in our consciousness, which have something to do with why we understand that Enoch was a man. Third, we have volitions as mortals.

In this article, I think Peirce does a great job explaining how Rule, Case, and Result relate to Deduction and Induction. I think that both Deduction and Induction are being actions of the body rather than concepts of the mind. In this light, inference is the result of deduction and induction but the cause of hypothesis. When we make a hypothesis, we do not involve any concrete case of experience because we have not experienced what we hypothesize will happen in the future.

According to Peirce, deduction proceeds from Rule and Case to Result and it is the formula of Volition. I agree with him in the first proposition. Yes, we can see that it proceeds from Rule and Case to Result because of what is true. What makes Enoch a man is that he is mortal like all men. What makes him different than all men is that he is Enoch. Our answers about our psychology involve our physiology more than the habits of our mind. I think that Peirce is wrong when he says that Deduction is the formula of Volition.

We can use mathematics to support why Peirce said Volition. There are rules like all triangles have three sides and the sum of the angles is 180 degrees. And in this case, we know that this rule is true because of how numbers work. If we see the equation 60 + 60 + 60 = 180 we understand that 180 is the sum of the measures of some particular triangle, not just one. Why do we attribute 180 degrees to a triangle and not a line? Rules.

We understand that this is true because of the sign 60 and + and how they are connected to equal the idea of 180. Does 180 degrees exist in our minds or only because of the formula? It's a mixture of both, which is one reason why we can use induction to improve our science by explaining that there are limits to deduction. We can only think about rules of mathematics so much until we say it's time for induction. Peirce says that Induction is a part of the ancient system of formal logic that we can all share and that it proceeds from Case and Result to Rule; it is the formula of the formation of a habit or general conception - a process which is psychological and logical and dependent upon the repetition of instances or sensations. For example, one time I took a mathematics test and I was prepared for the test because somebody taught me how to reason in algebra, arithmetic, and geometry. Because of good teachers, we develop strong habits of mind that lead us to our general conceptions about how to proceed in certain math processes. Hypothesis proceeds from Rule and Result to Case. For instance, I conjecture and say that somebody that taught me how solve equations in mathematics was taught by somebody else how to teach students math and I say the next time I take a math test, I will think of my teacher.