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Editorial

Friendship and Philosophy

This issue marks eight years of publishing *The Wednesday*. Every anniversary of the magazine revives in me some of the original excitement of publishing the first issue. How remarkable that a group of friends who met, informally, every Wednesday to talk about ideas poetry and philosophy are still after all these years talking as intellectual friends? Meeting via Zoom made it possible for members to join from different parts of the UK, Europe and the USA.

I wish on this occasion to talk here about friendship and philosophy. Is philosophy a solitary endeavour or a collective enterprise? Is friendship essential to philosophising or is something external? History of philosophy provides many answers. Sometimes, friendship seems to be a prerequisite of philosophy. Take the example of the Greeks. Reading Plato's dialogues you sense that there was a group of people around Socrates who were serious about philosophical matters. Most notably, Plato's Symposium records recorded a dinner party and philosophical discussion. But one gets the feeling that such informal philosophical gatherings got more formalised with the establishment of Plato's Academy. The informal tradition was carried on by the Stoics and the Cynics and the formal by Aristotle in his own school.

Philo of Alexandria, talking about the philosophers of his time, gave a good description of such a gathering of philosophically minded persons. He said of them 'Their bodies remain on earth, but they give wing to their souls, so that, rising into the ether, they may observe the powers which dwell there, as is fitting for those who truly become citizens of the world'. With each new movement in philosophy this sense gains affirmation, be it reviving Greek philosophy in Baghdad in the ninth century, or creating a German school of Idealism at the end of the eighteenth century, or changing the face of philosophy with the Linguistic Turn and the development of analytical philosophy at the beginning of the twentieth century. These movements were created within a formal academic environment, as in Baghdad's Bayt al-Hikmah (The House of Wisdom) and in modern times the university. Universities brought the idea of specialists working in the same locality, and in many cases living not far from each other, and socialising with each other. Memoirs of philosophers show such an atmosphere (for Germany, see Wulf's *Magnificent Rebels*, for Oxford, Midgley's *The Owl of Minerva*).

Deleuze and Guattari demonstrated the idea of philosophising together in their many books. Their remarkable friendship helped them produced some very original works. In *What is Philosophy?* Deleuze and Guattari argued that friendship is a precondition of philosophy. They invoked the example of the Greeks. What they noticed in ancient Greek society in particular, is that democracy of the state and friendship (socialising) allowed the exchange and spread of ideas. They thought that Greek democracy not only allowed citizens to express their opinions but that there was no hierarchy to impose a transcendent power over society. Of course, one could challenge their historical accuracy, and the examples of slaves and women has been raised against their view of Greek society, but still the philosophical import of their view matters and it is relevant to the point expressed here. There is more to their view when they contrasted Greek society with Mediaeval society (transcendence of religion), or Modern Capitalist society (transcendence of the market). There is also a need to mention the contrast between opinion which they value negatively, and concepts, the ingredient of philosophy, which they value positively, but we may take up these points in a future editorial.

To sum up the relation between philosophy and friendship, here is a quote from the Scottish philosopher John Macmurray in the introduction of his book *The Self as Agent*:

'So far as the nature of the subject-matter would allow I have sought to employ the methods and the terminology which are usual in abstract and formal philosophical analysis. But it is in accordance with the general thesis that the abstract theoretical discussion has a concrete and practical reference and that this, too, should be expressed. The simplest expression that I can find for the thesis I have tried to maintain is this: All meaningful knowledge is for the sake of action, and all meaningful action for the sake of friendship'.

I am grateful to my dear friend Jeanne Warren for the quote above and for introducing me to the thoughts of Macmurray a decade ago.

The Wednesday group weekly meetings and magazine are conducted in the spirit of friendship, and it gives me a great pleasure on this occasion to thanks all members of the group, past and present, and all those who contributed weekly talks, or wrote in the magazine, as well as poets and artists. Special thanks to my editorial board, especially Chris Seddon. But the magazine would have been a wasted effort if it was not for the readers. I am grateful to them all. Thank you.

The Editor

The Analytic – Synthetic Distinction Revisited

On April 30th *The Wednesday* group discussed the Analytic/Synthetic distinction and other related ideas. The discussion began with a quotation from W. V. Quine, a twentieth-century logician who doubted the validity of such a distinction:

'Kant's cleavage between analytic and synthetic truths was foreshadowed in Hume's distinction between relations of ideas and matters of fact.'

CHRIS SEDDON

Analytic Judgements

The usual example of an analytic judgement ls:

- All bachelors are unmarried

Other examples include:

- Triangles have three sides
- Tomorrow is another day
- I want what I want
- 2 + 3 = 5

Analytic judgements are so-called because it seems that the consequent is already contained in the antecedent. Thus you only need to analyse - or 'break up' - the antecedent into conjuncts, to find that the consequent is already there.

For example, by definition a bachelor is understood to be a man who has never been married. Thus you can tell that a bachelor is unmarried simply by analysing the idea of a bachelor and seeing that it already includes the idea of being unmarried. You do not need to survey the population to see how many bachelors are actually unmarried, because if they were married they would not be counted as bachelors in the first place.

Similarly, a triangle is understood to be an enclosed figure with three straight sides. So, simply by analysing the idea of what it is to be a triangle, you can infer that it has three sides.

Again, tomorrow is understood to be the day after today, and the present tense when applied to days is understood to refer to today. So, simply by analysing the idea of what it is to be tomorrow and what it is to be different from today, you can infer that tomorrow is another day.

I want what I want is even simpler. What I want is understood to be what I want. In one sense the inference is not even analysis, apart from analysis of the structure 'A is A'.

(2 + 3) is understood to mean the sum of 2 and 3. If you understand the idea of two, the idea of three, and the idea of adding counting numbers, then you already understand that the sum of two and three is five. You might as a child have learnt the idea of counting by numbers and adding them together by playing with bricks, but you did not discover anything about those bricks. If you came up with the wrong answer, the teacher would not check the bricks, she would check your understanding. Did you always count straight from 'three' to 'five', missing out 'four'? Then probably you did not have the idea of five. Did you start counting the added bricks again at 'one', instead of counting on from the last of the original bricks? Or did you mash together five lumps of plasticine and count them as one lump? Then perhaps you did not have the idea of addition. And so on.

Synthetic Judgements

Synthetic judgements are so-called because, instead of analysing the antecedent and breaking it apart to discover the consequent already included in it, they seem to take two separate ideas and synthesise them - or 'put them together' - to form a new idea.

For example:

- Bachelors postpone the washing-up

Similarly:

- Triangles are used for stability in construction
- Tomorrow I will be tired
- I want what you're having
- 2 + 3 are the hot drinks in our order

Kant father of the analytic/ synthetic distinction

We use synthetic judgements more often than analytic judgements. If we understand the terms used to express an analytic judgement, we already know that it is true. However, if we understand the terms used to express a synthetic judgement, that understanding is a guide as to what evidence might help determine whether it happens to be true.

For example, the idea of postponing the washing-up is not included in the idea of being a bachelor. To discover whether the synthesis of the two ideas is actually true, one would need experience of bachelors - either one's own experience, or the testimony of reliable witnesses.

It may be part of the idea of being a triangle that a triangle could be used for stability in construction, but the idea that they are in fact so used is not. Experience is also needed to know which materials are sufficiently rigid even to justify the application of the idea of a straight line, and hence the idea of a triangle.

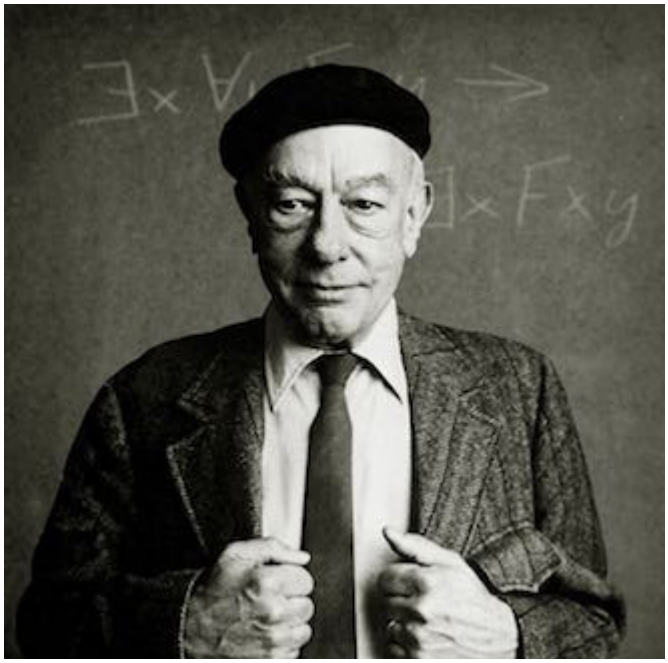
The idea of me being tired is not part of the idea of it being tomorrow. Their synthesis is a new idea, which expresses a genuine prediction, which crucially might or might not turn out to be true.

The idea of me wanting something is not part of the idea of you having it. It might turn out that I want what you're having on one occasion. It might even turn out that I want whatever you're having every time, maybe even on principle. But of course, we can understand the difference - we know what it would mean for me not to want what you're having.

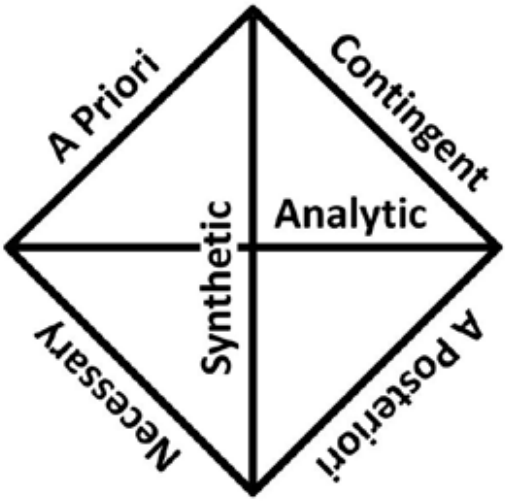
The idea of how many hot drinks in our order is not included in the idea of 2 + 3, nor vice versa. There may be two teas and three coffees, but that is a synthetic statement - it creates a new idea from the idea of how many teas, the idea of how many coffees, the idea of two, the idea of three, and the idea that nobody wants any other hot drink. Once we know that there are only two teas and three coffees, we know without needing to wait and count that there are five hot drinks, but we cannot work out how many hot drinks in our order just by analysing the idea of a hot drink in an order.

Logical Necessity

Analytic judgements are sometimes described as necessarily true, and synthetic judgements are sometimes described as contingently true. Logical necessity in this sense is very different from practical necessity. For example, it is necessary to buy a ticket before boarding a train, but this is not a logical necessity. The idea of boarding a train does not include the idea of buying a ticket - it is after all possible to board a train without buying a ticket. You may decide to do it, and you may get caught, but it is not logically impossible, like being



Quine



Logical Concepts after Kant

a married bachelor, or a triangle with five sides.

The idea of a judgement being analytic is characterised above as if it seems that the consequent is already contained (as a conjunct) in the antecedent. Each of the examples takes the form of a generalised inference, with an antecedent and a consequent:

- All bachelors are unmarried - IF something is a bachelor THEN it is unmarried
- Triangles have three sides - IF something is a triangle THEN *it* has three sides
- Tomorrow is another day - IF something is tomorrow THEN it is another day
- I want what I want - IF something is what I want THEN it is what I want
- 2 + 3 = 5 - IF something is 2 + 3 THEN it is 5

Analytic judgement are in this sense a special form of a necessarily true judgement. The idea of a consequent already being contained as a conjunct in an antecedent can be more precisely defined by saying that the conjunction of the consequent and the antecedent is identical with the antecedent. In an analytic judgement, the consequent adds nothing to the antecedent. Thus:

- An unmarried bachelor = A bachelor.
- A three-sided triangle = A triangle.
- Another day tomorrow = Tomorrow.
- Wanting something that I want = Wanting it.
- Being 2+3 and being 5 = Being 2+3.

The idea of an analytic judgement can be generalised to the idea of a necessarily true judgement by defining a necessarily true judgements as being a (trivial) judgement that provides no information, in the sense of adding nothing to any antecedent. More precisely, a necessary judgement is one the conjunction of which with any other judgement is identical to that other judgement.

Language

Mathematical theorems in particular can be difficult to understand. The effort required to understand them sufficiently to see that their truth follows simply from the ideas used to express them - that is, to prove them - can reasonably be considered a voyage of discovery. This ‘discovery’ that a certain combination of ideas is actually necessarily true, can feel like a ‘discovery’ about the world beyond our ideas. Certainly, the ideas can be useful in formulating contingent judgements, but mathematical theorems and other analytical or necessary judgements are not in themselves contingent. They help us realise how the component ideas work together, but they tell us nothing else.

Language and communication

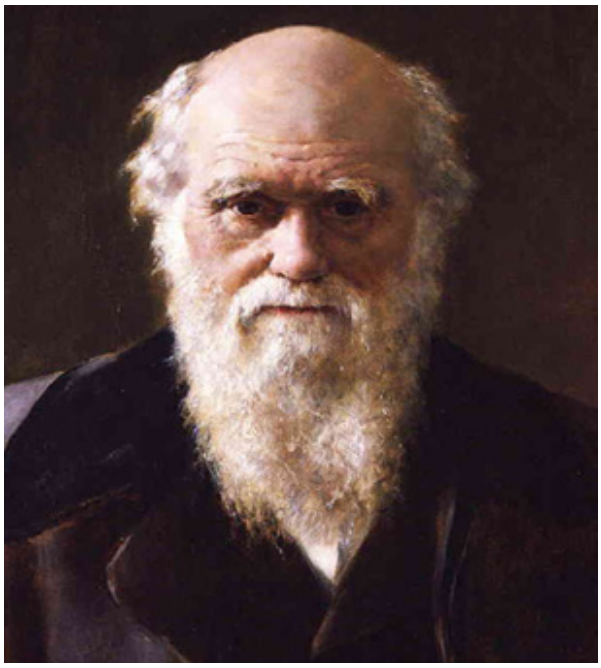
Reflecting on what language is can help appreciate this distinction between the language used to express a judgement and the judgement itself. Language is a way to help us consider what may or may not be true or desirable, through the use of shared vocabulary (which links signs to ideas) and grammar (which links ways of combining signs to ways of combining ideas).

Natural language is complex, relying on vocabulary and grammar which is vague, and may vary to a certain degree between language users at different times, in terms of exactly how they would understand a word or combination in every context. Sometimes too, ideas are included by implication, rather than explicit reference. This organic complexity does not undermine the basic characterisation of language above. In particular, we can see that different language may be used to express the same idea. Whether I write '2+3 = 5' or say 'two plus three equals five' or programme a computer to evaluate '2 3 add 5 equals', I am expressing the same idea using different vocabulary. The first two examples could even be said to use the same grammar. But all of them use the same ideas, and could even be said to use the same combination of ideas. Sometimes, though, the same idea is expressed using a different combination of ideas. Supposing I wrote '1+4 = 5' or '2+4 = 6'. The combination of ideas in '1+4' is different from the combination of ideas in '2+3', but they express the same idea as '5'. Similarly, the combination of ideas in '1+4 = 5' is different from the combination of ideas in '2+4 = 6', but they express the same idea - that is, the necessary truth, which adds nothing to anything.

In mathematics we study ideas and how they combine. Analytic or necessary judgements are not in themselves informative. Thus we cannot even tell them apart and there is indeed only one analytically true judgement and one analytically false judgement. Our only interest in them is the fact that many different combinations of ideas express the analytically true judgement, and this helps us to understand those ideas better. Then we can use those relatively abstract ideas in combination with more concrete ideas to express a rich variety of contingent, synthetic judgements .

The *a Priori/a Posteriori* Distinction

A related pair of ideas is that of *a priori* vs *a posteriori* judgements. An *a posteriori* judgement is made as a result of experience - whether personal or anecdotal. It is posterior in the sense of being made after experience. An *a priori* judgement, on the other hand, is made prior to, or at least independently of, experience.



Darwin

Clearly, an analytic or necessarily true judgement is true *a priori* because it does not depend on experience - although we may well need experience to learn the ideas used to express such judgements. Indeed, we can only express an analytic judgement through language, we cannot demonstrate it in ordinary behaviour. Our behaviour can never be explained by supposing that we believe or desire something that is necessarily true anyway.

Clearly, too, many synthetic or contingent judgements are true *a posteriori*. I may only believe something because of current evidence and existing beliefs based on prior experience. I may only desire something new because of existing desires and new beliefs. But existing beliefs and desires have to come from somewhere. Evidence for a belief is really only something else I believe. The only difference is that the evidence is a belief which is supposed to be better-established. Motivation for a desire is really only something else I desire. The only difference is that the motivation is a desire which is supposed to be less negotiable - in the sense that, if I could achieve it in some easier way, I would.

Even the ideas combined to form beliefs and desires have to come from somewhere. Some ideas may come from previous experience - patterns of specific events which suggest generalised judgements which can only be expressed using new ideas. But a pattern is itself just a combination of prior ideas. The only difference is that the prior ideas are in that way more basic. Thus, *a posteriori* beliefs must ultimately depend on beliefs that I have regardless of evidence, *a posteriori* desires must ultimately depend on desires that I have regardless of other motives, and *a posteriori* ideas must ultimately depend on ideas that I had before I could learn any new ideas.

Kant realised that such basic ideas and judgements - whether beliefs or desires - must be acquired *a priori*, in order for us to acquire any further ideas and judgements *a posteriori*. Thus, he realised the existence of judgments that were synthetic and *a priori*, as well as synthetic and *a posteriori*. It is only since Darwin's theory of evolution that we are able to go beyond attempting to classify *a priori* ideas and synthetic judgements to actually understand the source and relative reliability of such innate ideas. Like most evolved attributes, *a priori* ideas and judgements have stood the test of aeons of evolution, but may not be so reliable outside the limits of our natural heritage - for example, in sub-atomic or inter-galactic science.

Conclusion

Quine, quoted above, argued that the analytic/synthetic distinction was not well-founded. He felt that the lack of an objective understanding of what constituted a definition, a meaning (or an idea), or identical ideas; and the flexible interplay of truth and meaning in ordinary language, meant that so-called analytic statements were really only somewhat less open to re-evaluation than so-called synthetic statements.

My earlier article on Concepts in issues 93-95 of *The Wednesday* May 2019 (freely available on the website www.thewednesdayoxford.com) provides more details on how careful analysis of the notions of definition, synonymy, and vagueness justifies the analytic/synthetic distinction. I hope this article illustrates how a simple understanding of how language relates to human behaviour helps to explain basic philosophical principles, and avoids the analytical nihilism fashionable with some philosophers of the last century.


The Wednesday
Thinking Out Loud
8th Year Anniversary !

Misology in Philosophical Discussion

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Biologists say human beings belong in the species *Homo sapiens*, 'rational beings'. Aristotle defined human beings as rational animals. But are human beings really rational? Are human beings really willing and able to take all reasons, 'true premises', into account, apply correct reasoning, 'valid inferences', and accept the consequences, 'conclusions'?

I do not think so. In my experience, people regularly refuse to accept the conclusions of arguments, even if they agree that the premises are true and the conclusion follows by necessity. They typically justify their refusal by rejecting the authority of reason. Claiming that reason does not hold a privileged place in the search for truth but must conform to some other standard.

As someone put it, 'We should unite head and heart'. That is, we should rely on emotion (*pathos,* 'the heart') to keep reason (*logos*, 'the head') in check. The same person also warned me that 'Reason can get you to hell in a handcart'. Of course, it may well be that emotions - like nationalism, fear, anger, hate, and even passionate love - are far more likely to get you to hell in a handcart, but that is not the point here. The point here is that he believes we should not rely on reason only.

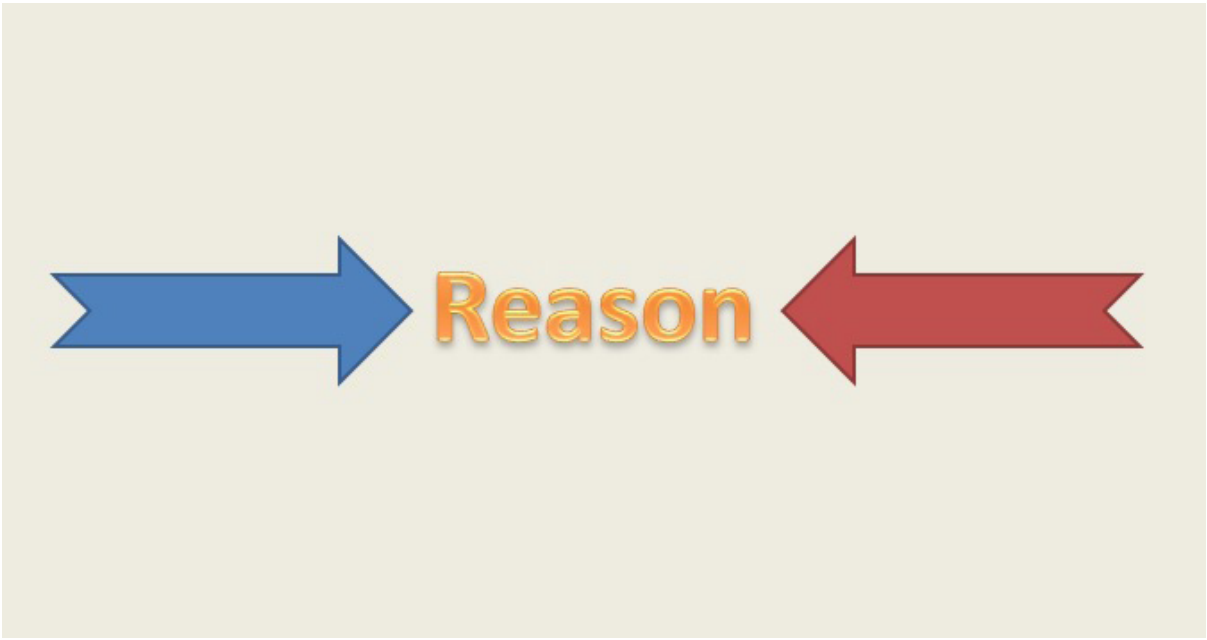
Someone else expressed her distrust of reason by saying, 'While I cannot disprove your view, it carries no conviction with me and I cannot see why I should agree with it'. Of course, she is free to reject any claim, even if it is proven. But it would not be rational to do so. The rational thing to do is to accept what is proven, even if it is counterintuitive, controversial, at odds with common sense, public opinion, dogma, and so on.

Someone else took it a step further and asked, 'Can something be considered a proof when it fails to carry the conviction of validity to intelligent others?' and he argued that it cannot. The wording is a bit confusing, but what he meant is that if a proof does not readily convince others, then it is not really a proof. However, whether something qualifies as a proof and whether it convinces others are different matters:

On one hand, there are proofs that do not readily convince others, especially if they constitute so-called paradigm shifts. Take the Copernican Revolution, which showed that the sun does not orbit the earth but the earth orbits the sun, and which took several centuries to become generally accepted. As George Bernard Shaw put it succinctly: 'All great truths begin as blasphemies.'

On the other hand, some of the most convincing speeches ever did not appeal to reason (*logos*) but relied on an appeal to shared ideals (*pathos*) and on the speaker's charisma (*ethos*). For example, the 'I have a dream' speech by Martin Luther King. And Kennedy's 'Ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country' inaugural address. These speeches are *rhetorical*, meant to persuade, rather than *rational*, aiming at truth. So, whether something qualifies as a proof and whether it is convincing are different matters.

When people came up with such 'objections', rejecting the authority of reason, I felt the ground shifting under my feet. The question was no longer if my reasoning was sound, but if reasoning is a sufficient means of knowledge. The latter seems undeniable to me. I am still grappling with the very possibility that reason is not a sufficient means of knowledge. Please note that I am not arguing that reason is *necessary* for knowledge - there are other means of knowledge, but I do believe that reason is *sufficient* for knowledge.



To my surprise, the distrust of reason is nothing new. It is called 'misology', from the Greek *misos* ('hatred') and *logos* ('reason'). Socrates called it the 'greatest evil', since it allows us to be deceived by appearances and allows desire to triumph over reason (in Plato's *Phaedo*). He thought it was brought about by repeated exposure to flawed arguments or deceptive rhetoric. If individuals repeatedly encounter arguments that seem persuasive yet prove false, they might conclude that reason itself is unreliable.

Nowadays, the situation may be aggravated by the fact that philosophers are typically alpha-people - people who excel in soft topics, like languages, literature, and history. In The Netherlands, only kids who excelled in languages and agreed to study Greek and Latin attended the 'gymnasium' and could go on to study philosophy. Alpha-people are great at connecting-the-dots but are typically 'allergic' to more formal reasoning.

For example: When I asked a philosopher to spell out the argument for his thesis, explaining that I distrust prose as it may hide accidental and intentional ambiguity and invalid inferences, he refused, saying that he distrusts formal reasoning. Another philosopher rejected more formal reasoning because it does not allow for the complexities required for more intelligent discourse. That these claims are obviously false is not the point here. The point is that these professional philosophers do not trust more formal reasoning.

Of course, the reliability of reason is necessarily lower in case of inductive and abductive arguments. Inductive arguments generalize from particular observations to general claims, and such generalizations are fallible. And abductive arguments are just estimated guesses. So, one cannot trust the conclusions of such arguments to be certain.

But deductive arguments are of a different kind. If they are sound - that is, proofs - their conclusions are certain. For example: If all cows are mammals, and all mammals are animals, then all cows are animals. Such arguments can seem uninformative, but they can sometimes yield interesting insights.

So, while a certain distrust in some types of reasoning may be healthy, we should not take it to mean that even the most basic deductive arguments cannot be trusted. While some types of arguments cannot yield certainty, it does not mean that no arguments can yield certainty. That some arguments are flawed, should not lead us to conclude that no arguments can be trusted—in fact, formal reason can help us to detect such flaws.

Jazz is The Music

Tangibly, the web of silence grew,
where angry words flew
some moments before, now settled
in the creases of the curtains, anchored
to the nooks and crannies of the walls,
the piles of the Persian rug.
You ducked at the hit and miss, resigned
to the dull residue in the wine glass.
The words are gone, but you are trapped,
caught in the web
woven by the spider of loss.

Reach out, touch this silence.
Cut it with the edge of your mind.
Escape before the beast pounces.
Cheat it out of its own satisfaction,
kick-box its stronghold and launch
at its superiority.
Step on it, dance on it,
rid it of its power! Crash
its ugly black feet. Jazz
is the music that kills it off.

Poem and Artwork by *Scharlie Meeuws*

Between Certainty and Opinion:
The Conflict and Cooperation of *Episteme* and *Doxa*

DR. ALAN XUEREB

Human knowledge is marked by a persistent tension between *episteme* (systematic, demonstrable knowledge) and *doxa* (opinion, belief, or common sense). From Plato to contemporary epistemologists, this dichotomy has shaped debates not only about the nature of truth but also about how societies navigate knowledge, politics, and lived experience. While the two concepts are often presented in conflict: *episteme* as rigorous and objective, *doxa* as unstable and subjective, there is also a subtle cooperation between them. In the practical realm, neither functions wholly without the other. This essay explores the dynamic between *episteme* and *doxa*, showing how they conflict, intersect, and ultimately contribute to a more holistic understanding of human cognition and society.

The relationship between *episteme* and *doxa* has been pivotal in shaping epistemological discourse and societal understanding of knowledge. Historically, Plato's distinction between *episteme* (true knowledge) and *doxa* (opinion) emphasized the superiority of systematic knowledge over mere opinion, a theme that remains influential in contemporary epistemology. However , modern interpretations recognize a more nuanced interaction between these concepts. In epistemology, the debate often revolves around the notion of belief versus credence, which parallels the dichotomy of *episteme* and *doxa*. Belief can be seen as a categorical attitude akin to *doxa*, while credence represents a more measured, probabilistic approach reflective of *episteme*. Scholars explore this distinction to understand how lay beliefs can evolve into knowledge through systematic inquiry, highlighting subtle interplay rather than sheer conflict between the two. Moreover, educational and epistemological discussions have evolved to address the tension between theory (*episteme*) and practice (akin to *doxa* in its practical application).

The dominance of abstract, theoretical knowledge in academia often undermines the value of practical skills and experience. Contemporary scholarship suggests a revaluation of practical knowledge (phronesis) and advocates for a balanced integration of theory and practice. In sociological terms, *doxa* underlies the implicit knowledge or common sense within societies, often silenced or marginalized in academic discourse. For example, the commercialization of universities and the prevailing focus on Cartesian rationalism have led to a neglect of *doxa* and practical, affective dimensions of knowledge, thereby constraining diverse and holistic understanding within academic settings. This suggests that while *episteme* provides structured frameworks for understanding, *doxa* embodies lived experiences that can inform and enrich theoretical insights. Overall, the dichotomy of *episteme* and *doxa* is not simply one of opposition; rather, it represents a dynamic interaction where each can inform and enhance the other, contributing to a more comprehensive understanding of truth and knowledge in both philosophical and practical domains.

Classical Foundations

The conflict begins with Plato, for whom *episteme* represents true knowledge, immutable, eternal, and tied to the world of Forms, while *doxa* is tethered to the visible world of change, illusion, and imperfection. In the *Republic*, Plato characterizes *doxa* as the realm of opinion, where people take shadows for reality, mistaking appearance for truth. For Plato, the philosopher's task is to ascend from the cave of *doxa* to the sunlight of *episteme*.

Aristotle, however, softens this dichotomy. While he upholds the primacy of *episteme* in science (as in the *Posterior Analytics*), he grants *doxa* a legitimate role in ethics and politics. In the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle introduces phronesis (practical wisdom), which navigates the terrain between *episteme* and *doxa*. Practical deliberation must rely on en*doxa*, reputable opinions of the wise, as starting points for moral reasoning. Thus, while *episteme* remains the ideal, Aristotle acknowledges that *doxa* is indispensable in domains where certainty is unattainable.

Modern Tensions

In the modern era, science emerged as the dominant form of *episteme*, grounded in empirical method and falsifiability. Meanwhile, *doxa* was often relegated to the domain of ideology, myth, or public opinion susceptible to manipulation and error. This division is perhaps most stark in the work of Auguste Comte, who envisioned a 'positive science' that would replace theological and metaphysical speculation (*doxa*) with empirical certainty.

Yet the 20th century brought this epistemic confidence into question. Philosophers like Karl Popper and Thomas Kuhn highlighted that scientific knowledge itself is not free from paradigms, assumptions, and sociocultural influences, features previously attributed to *doxa*. Kuhn's *Structure of Scientific Revolutions* revealed that even *episteme* evolves through shifts in collective scientific belief, echoing the dynamics of opinion. Similarly, Paul Feyerabend went further, arguing for a kind of epistemological anarchism, in which no single method or *episteme* could claim absolute authority.

In the political sphere, the divide manifests in technocracy versus democracy. Technocratic governance emphasizes rule by experts, bearers of *episteme*, whereas democratic systems valorize public opinion (*doxa*), even when uninformed. This

Out of Plato's cave

creates a persistent tension: should decisions be made by those who know or those who feel? In the age of misinformation, populism, and social media, this dilemma becomes more acute.

The Role of Language and Rhetoric

The Greek sophists, often maligned by Plato, recognized that rhetoric bridges *episteme* and *doxa*. In any attempt to persuade, one must work within the shared beliefs of the audience (*doxa*) while introducing reasoned arguments (*episteme*). As Chaim Perelman and Lucie Olbrechts-Tyteca argue in *The New Rhetoric*, argumentation is not about abstract truth alone but about making the reasonable acceptable to audiences.

In this sense, even the most rigorous scientific knowledge requires translation into the language of *doxa* to achieve practical or political effect. Climate science, for example, may rest on *episteme*, but its influence on policy and behaviour depends on how it is communicated and perceived in the public domain. Thus, cooperation between *episteme* and *doxa* becomes necessary for any applied knowledge to have meaningful impact.

Existential and Ethical Considerations

From an existential perspective, thinkers such as Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty challenge the idea that *episteme* alone can ground meaningful existence. For Heidegger, being-in-the-world is not reducible to abstract knowledge; we live primarily through understanding (*Verstehen*) and interpretation. In other words, *doxa,* our embodied, pre-theoretical engagement with the world, forms the basis of more formal knowledge.

Similarly, ethics cannot rest solely on *episteme*. Moral dilemmas often involve competing values, contextual nuance, and emotional resonance, all closer to *doxa* than to demonstrable fact. Martha Nussbaum, for example, defends the role of literature and emotion in moral reasoning, suggesting that *doxa* offers insights into human experience that *episteme* may overlook or suppress.

A Dialectical Relationship

Rather than a hierarchy or binary, it is better to think of the *episteme – doxa* relation as dialectical. Each corrects the excesses of the other: *episteme* tempers *doxa*'s impulsiveness, while *doxa* humanizes *episteme*'s abstraction. In deliberative democracy, as theorized by Jürgen Habermas, ideal discourse involves the participation of both expert knowledge and lay perspectives, an interplay that seeks rational consensus without domination.

Even Plato's cave allegory can be reinterpreted in this light. The philosopher who escapes the cave must not remain aloof in the light of *episteme* but return to the world of *doxa* to guide others, not by imposition but by persuasion and dialogue. In this re-reading, the philosopher becomes a bridge rather than a gatekeeper.

From Rivalry to Reciprocity

The conflict between *episteme* and *doxa* is real: one seeks truth through demonstration; the other navigates probability, perception, and belief. But to privilege one at the expense of the other is to risk epistemic arrogance or populist relativism. A society governed only by *episteme* risks becoming inhuman; one ruled only by *doxa* descends into chaos. True wisdom lies in reciprocity, a recognition that knowledge and opinion, reason and belief, theory and practice must be held in productive tension. This cooperation may not eliminate conflict, but it can lead to richer forms of understanding and more just forms of action.

Wittgenstein

A Letter to Paul Engelmann

I once wanted to give a few words in the foreword which now actually are not in it, which, however, I'll write to you now because they might be a key for you. I wanted to write that my work consists of two parts: of the one which is here, and of everything which I have not written. And precisely this second part is the important one. (Wittgenstein)

I

The apophatic way, that's what you chose.
It's what you put in simpler words to Paul,
Your friend Paul Engelmann, so they'd disclose
The gist to one sufficiently in thrall
To your much-touted genius yet, as shows
In how you phrase it, one on whom they'd fall,
Your words, as enigmatically as those
Of Jesus. He must surely have brought small
Assurance to disciples in the throes
Of doubt or waning faith by his hardball
Return-shot parables that often pose
An obstacle to faith, or sheer brick wall.
The message says: your pleading merely goes
To show that faith's what's needed first of all,
Before the listener-out for it yet knows
How faithful ears can harken to its call.

CHRIS **NORRIS**

II

Your young disciple Engelmann's the one
Who took it on for you, that role assigned
To neophytes, word-spreaders, those who run
The 'life and legend' side of things, or find
Themselves a modest moment in the sun
By turning up some letter left behind
In desk or archive. There, the Master's spun
A tale that exegetes can bring to mind,
Like scriptural glossators, when they've done
With exegetic toils and feel inclined
To lend some credence to the myth begun
By his, the Master's, having once enshrined
It in a missive they'd most likely shun
As anecdotal stuff, though close-entwined
Thereafter in a narrative that none
Could junk once more judiciously streamlined.

III

'Whereof we cannot speak, thereof should we
Keep silent' – wise advice, since any chat
On suchlike topics would turn out to be,
I fear, so like what those who chew the fat
On 'themes from Wittgenstein' regard as key
To figuring out just what he's getting at,
Or by what duly tacit process we
Loyal members of the commentariat
Can join that talkative conspiracy
Of hush. Then, as with Carroll's Cheshire Cat,
We're left with just the grin, the trace that he,
The Cat or Ludwig, take to signal that,
If we've received their joint epiphany,
We'd best believe the feline apophat:
'Here saying's out and showing's in to bat'.
Else what's unspoken proves a silent plea
That speech resume its living habitat,
Words cease to honour that perverse decree,
And commentators heed the caveat
That says (and shows) how sense and gravity
Alike keep that cat firmly on the mat.

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The Knowing 'I'

Gravity grounds Being,
Levity liberates;
Opposed they create
Space for Creation.
I am tugged
By warring factions
Yet harmonized
By their circumambulation
Around a centre.
Mere gravity an-nihil-ates;
Mere levity disintegrates;
Mere Being remains unknown
Until given space
Where all things possible
Become known in time.

William Bishop

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