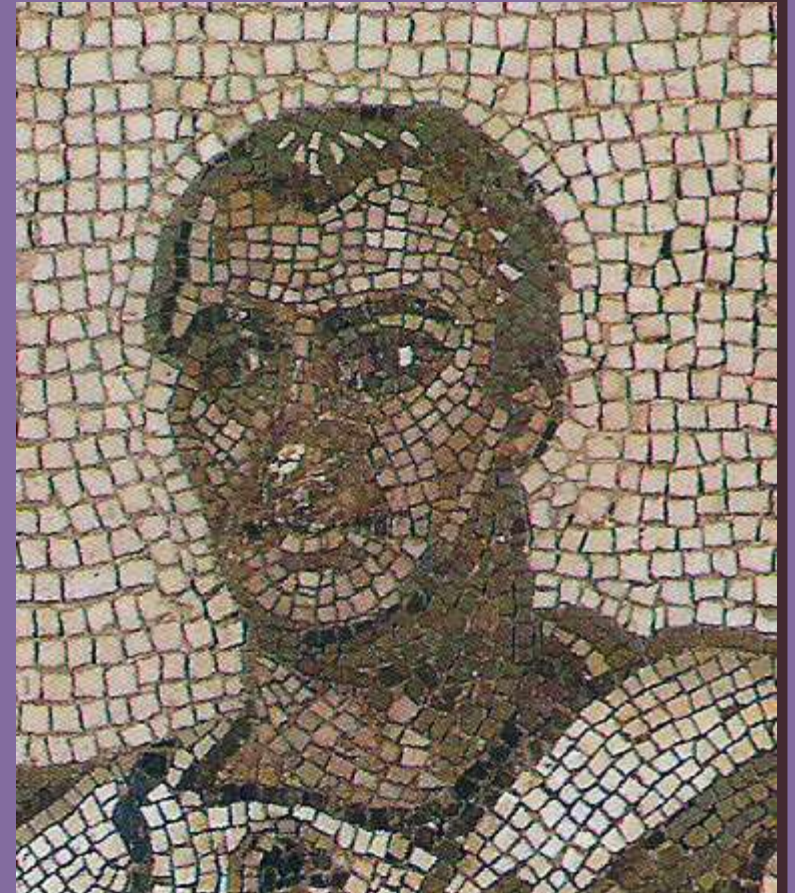


PHILOSOPHY FOR BEGINNERS

Week 12. Reason vs Experience?
Course round-up
5th December 2018





Class recap

- David Hume is an Empiricist philosopher
- Knowledge for him comes from the senses, either as ideas or impressions. Ideas less vivid
- Key influences include Locke's tabula rasa and Berkeley's idealism
- We compound our knowledge via association
- We infer based on custom, observing a constant conjunction of similar things.



Who am 'I'?

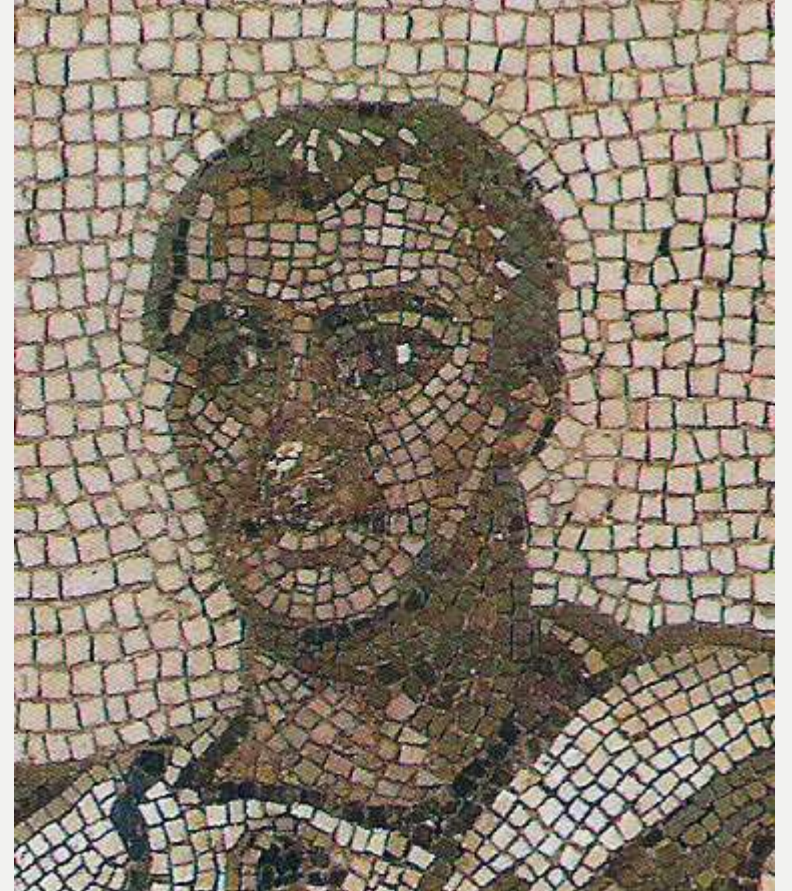
- Descartes: the self is “a thinking thing”, an immaterial substance
- Can you recall the criticisms from two weeks ago...?
- Locke: the self is a continuity of consciousness: 'the sameness of a rational being: and as far as this consciousness can be extended backwards to any past action or thought, so far reaches the identity of that *person*'.
- Thomas Reid criticises Locke for placing too much emphasis on memory. He gives the example of an old man who may recall being a brave soldier, but not that he was flogged at school for stealing apples. Yet as a brave officer, he could recall stealing the apple. By losing the memory, is that aspect of his personal identity also lost?



- *Hume is also sceptical about personal identity. Take a look at the arguments on the handout and discuss his views in groups of 2-3.*



‘nothing but a bundle or collection of different perceptions which succeed each other with inconceivable rapidity and are in perpetual flux and movement.’
(*Treatise*, Part IV, §6)



Bundle of impressions

- Ordinarily, we assume that we have enduring, permanent self, distinct from our fleeting impressions, moment to moment
- Hume asks: from what impression do we derive this idea that there is an “I” which accompanies all distinct impressions?
- If we examine our own impressions in introspection, nowhere do we encounter a substantial, enduring “I”
- Instead we just encounter further properties, a disparate jumble of sensations connected by resemblance and cause and effect – but they do not make up a unified “I”

Illusory I

- Hume seems to think that the idea of a unified, substantial “I” apart from these distinct impressions is a “category mistake”
- Suppose I wanted to show my friend around the University to show her what one was like – I take them to library, to the different labs, to the lecture halls and the offices, and so on
- But after the tour my friend says to me: “I’ve seen all these different rooms and labs and offices, but when are you going to show me the University?”
- My friend has made a category mistake – she thinks that because something has a particular name (**the** University), there must be some single, separate thing that corresponds to that name

Scepticism and the Self

- Hume thinks that our belief in a unified “I” is like this category mistake
- Because we use the personal pronoun “I”, we get into the habit of thinking there must be **something** that corresponds to the term, but this idea cannot be traced back to any prior impression and so we have no **rational** justification for it
- Like our beliefs about necessity in the world, it is a matter of habit

Is-Ought fallacy

- *Take a look at the argument on the handout. What do you think Hume is warning against?*
- Hume warns against the *Is-ought fallacy*: that just because things are a certain way, they should be that way
- No 'ought' judgement can be reasonably inferred based on simply what already is
- No ethical or evaluative judgement can be inferred from a set of purely factual premises
- What implications emerge from this?

Should we be good?

- Hume argues that human beings are both determined by causal necessity *and* that they are free
- Just as we observe necessity in the conjunction of bodies, so we can observe it between motives, character traits and circumstances *and* our bodily actions
- Hume is therefore a ‘compatibilist’ when it comes to free will
- It is not that reason is invalid when it comes to influencing our behaviour – rather, reason *alone* cannot move us to action
- We must also pay attention to feelings and desires, and the way our mind acts *spontaneously* through them



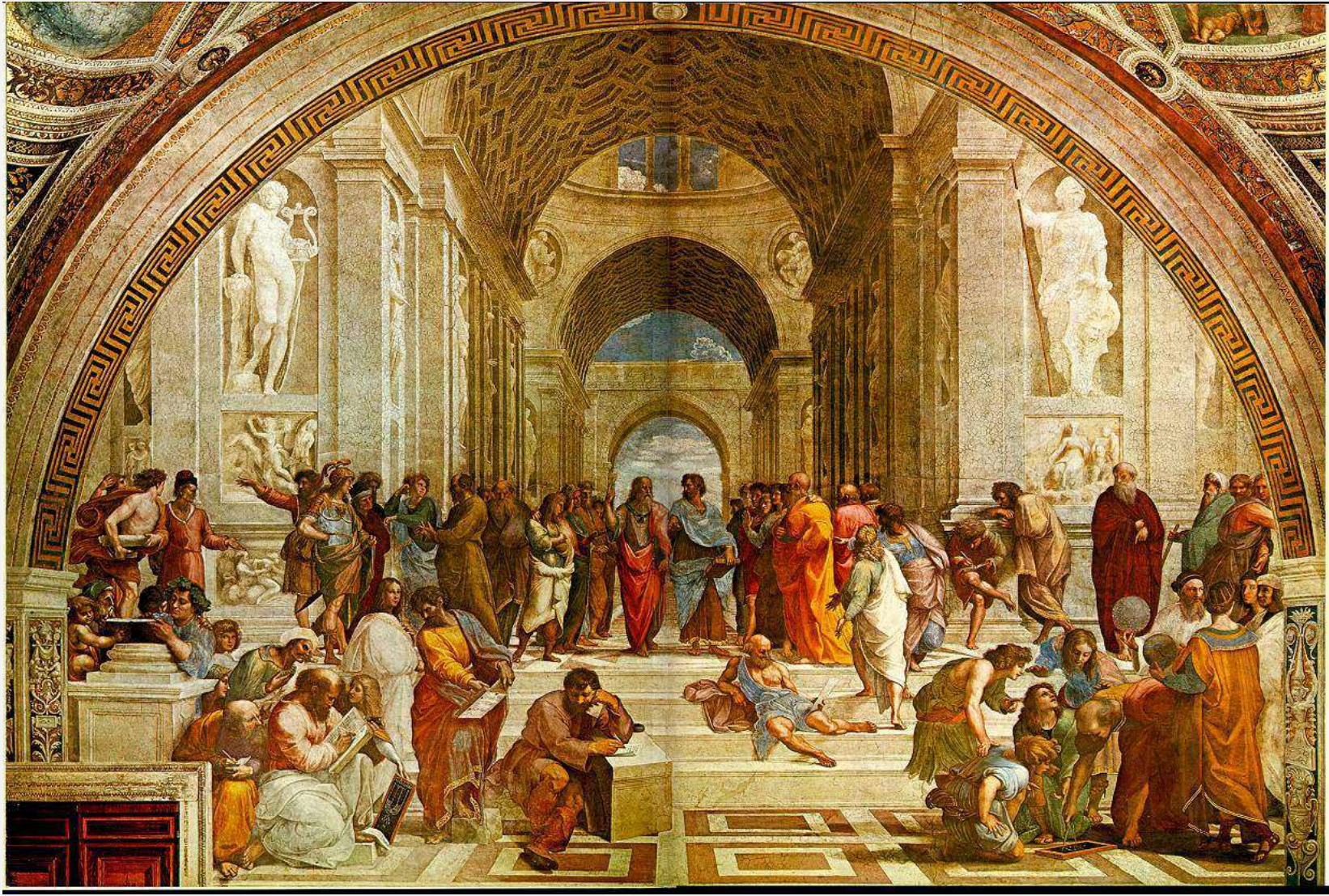
Course recap

Which philosopher has most struck you, and why?

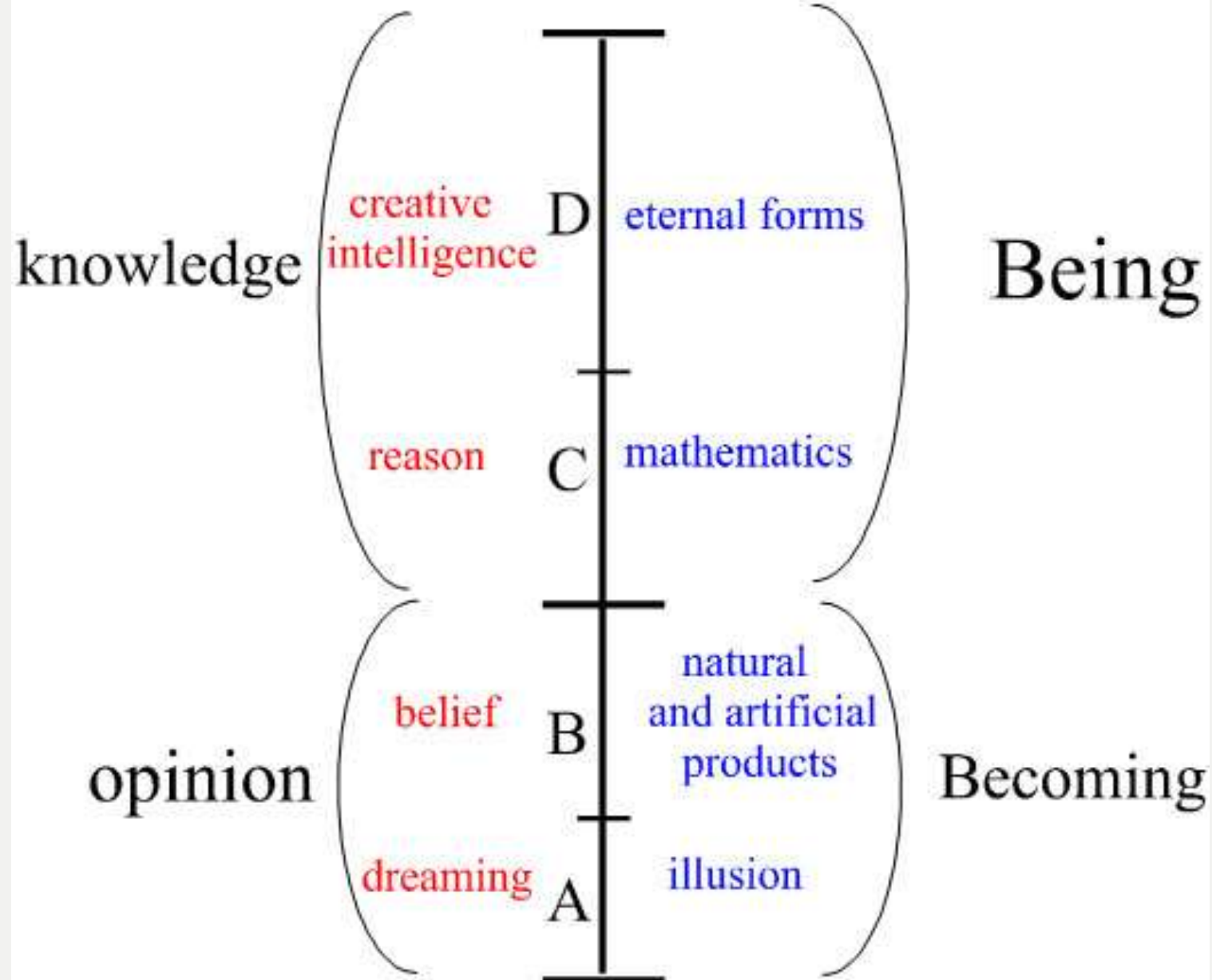


Who said what?

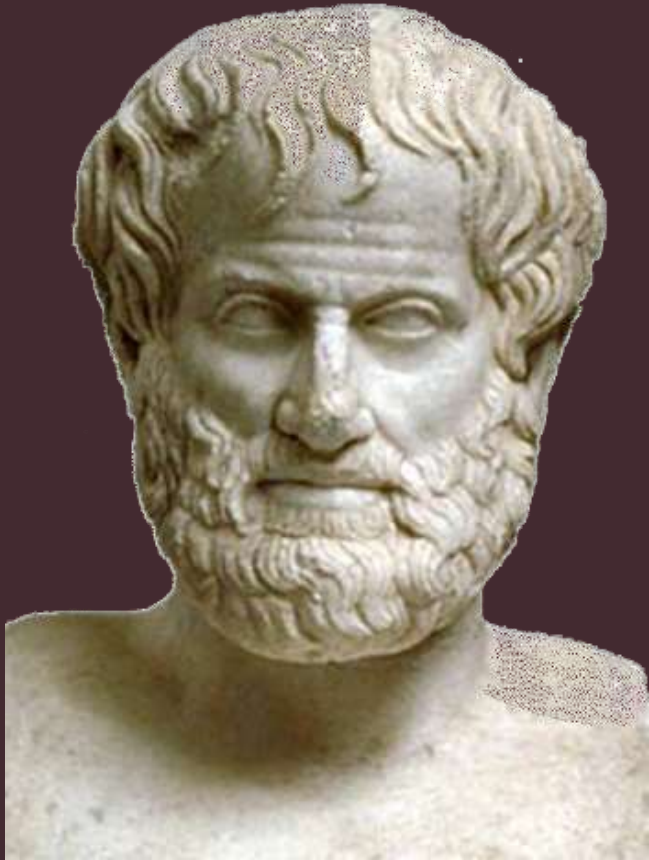
- In groups of 2-3, take a look at the quotes you've been given. Guess which philosopher said which phrase (or which it refers to), and explain why.
- Which of the philosophers we have covered have you found most interesting or perplexing? Again, share your thoughts in groups of 2 and 3 then we'll discuss them together.



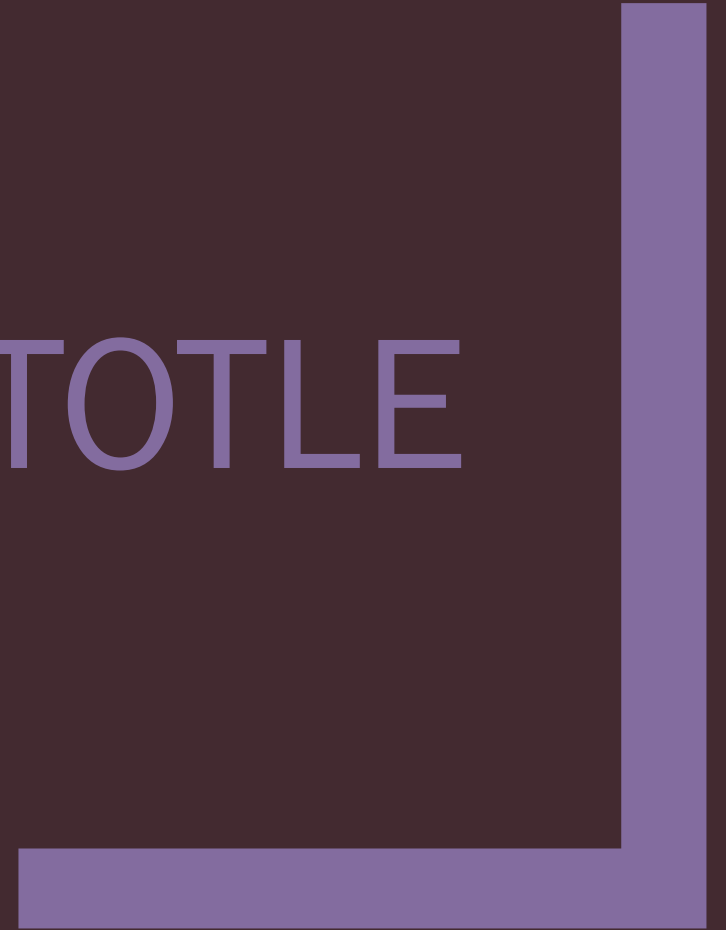
Model of the Divided Line







ARISTOTLE





DESCARTES





HUME

NEXT TERM:
MORAL &
POLITICAL
PHILOSOPHY



Moral philosophy...

- Next term is largely concerned with questions is moral and political philosophy. For example:
- Can there be an **objective** basis for moral judgments of what is right and wrong?
- Or are these only ever expressions of personal and cultural prejudices?
- What should be the things we consider when trying to decide on what the morally right thing to do?
- ... the consequences of actions? The intention that an action is performed with? Or the aim of becoming “virtuous” people?
- We will discuss questions of right and wrong, using Kant, Bentham, Peter Singer and others



... And political philosophy

- Is there are any legitimate justification for the authority of the State?
- What are the proper limits and proper functions of the State?
- Is there a fundamental trade-off between freedom and equality?
- Should the State try to maximise the freedom of its citizens or try to make people more equal?
- What do we even mean by talk of freedom anyway?
- Can we talk about there being “progress” in history, or are we really just talking about things being different?
- We will discuss Marx, Rousseau, Locke, Wollstonecraft and Spinoza

