Introduction: History & Philosophy: Syllabus

Introduction: Why Study Perception?
The Problem of Knowledge
The Greeks: philosophical giants (?)
Pre-Socratics: The Ionians
Parmenides, Pythagoras, Anaxagoras, Anaximander, Heraclitus
Senses confined to the realm of appearances; what is true occupies a realm beyond the senses
Heraclitus: you can’t step into the same river twice
Parmenides: whatever is real must be eternal and unchanging; such real existence can never be discovered by the senses
It is contradictory to attribute existence to something that is never the same at different times
Sophists
Meno, Protagoras
“sensationists”
“Man is the measure of all things”
Socrates: “knowledge does not consist in impressions of sense, but in reasoning about them.”
Plato:
Cave Illusion: perception and life goals interact
“truth” is subjective
“top-down” slant on perception
“rationalism” (really nativism, elitism): “true knowledge is a knowledge of the permanent principles of reality and not of changing appearances; it is a knowledge conveyed not by the senses but by reason analyzing experience.”
“knowledge of the world is of a cognitive, rather than a perceptual nature.”
Hippocrates
Reliance on observation and empirical method
Medical and anatomic observations lead to knowledge of perception, behavior, health, illness
Aristotle
Student of Plato @ Academy
Moved on, founded Lyceum
Phases: 1. senses respected, but ideas still reign supreme (very Platonic); 2. observation critical for discovery (uniquely his)
Soul derives from, and is understood through, study of the physical body
Sensory deficits of young and old due to “restlessness”—due to a biological/physical change
Naturalistic, physiological, empirical, but not radically materialistic
Soul does not equal mind; mind lives in the soul, imperishable
Functions: nutritive, perceptive, locomotor, and (in humans only) “universalizing” function (abstractioning)
Functions vary in level and sophistication based on biological differences between organisms. Animals have sensory experiences, since they have the organs.

In addition to the 5 senses, there is a “common sense” (sensus communis) that integrates the other perceptions (not “common sense” in modern, Reid-like way). The sensus communis is not a separate sense, but rather a process common to all the other senses.

Perceptions set up “vibrations” or movements of the soul that result in memories; the can and do decay.

This is very associationistic.

Senses do not convey knowledge; rather, they convey that from which the reasoning can extract knowledge.

**Stoics & Epicureans**

Stoics: Zeno, Seneca, Marcus Aurelius

Epicureans: Epicureus, Lucretius, Democritus

Both schools were answering extreme, even absurd teachings of Cynics and Skeptics, who said that nothing can be known about anything.

Both taught that the universe consisted of some physical “stuff” (energy, atomic particulates, fire, ether, etc.).

Epicureans: all knowledge originates in sensation; all experience due to physical interaction between matter of the world and matter of sense organ.

Stoics: knowledge begins as the mental image of the sensory events.

**Patristic**

Epictetus: “he who has sensations and pretends that he has not is worse than dead”

Transition from Roman to Christian era

Melding of Greek and Christian views

Monotheistic

Origen, Plotinus, Augustine

**Christian Era**

Augustine: examine nature and human behavior only to confirm the existence of God

Nonsensory inner awareness of truth, error, moral right, personal identity

This inner sense = consciousness, but more than that, it is a moral consciousness… perhaps more like conscience.

Tactile-vision theory: perception results from physical interaction between the seen object and the eye.

Perception is an active process

Discouraged scientific examination of humans and human behavior—we are not animals

In general, anti-intellectualism

**Galen: Scientific Alternative**

Curing the sick; a true practical clinician

Experimenting done to improve health care

**Middle Ages**

Mostly religious; near loss of much of science

(“Modern”) **Empiricism: The Authority of Experience**

Scientific scholarship

“Sensory evidence constitutes the primary data of all knowledge”

“origin, validity, and utility of ideas”

sensation and reflection

sensation is an active transaction

Experience affects how sensations are interpreted (e.g., blushing=shame)
Top-down influences on perception
Compare to Plato…Plato is more subjectivistic
Practical
“common sense” (modern definition)

**Rationalism**
“we have only understood something when we can supply the reason for its being what it is” – back to “final causes” like Aristotle

innate ideas: “that which cannot be given by experience”

Rene Descartes
Benedict Spinoza
Gottfried Wilhelm von Leibniz
Immanuel Kant (antirationalist)

**Materialism**
Metaphor of the machine

No reliance on spirituality to understand psychology

Perception as part of the scientific endeavor; it can also be used to study perception itself

Montaigne
Galileo
Kepler
Hobbes (social machine)
Voltaire
La Mettrie

**Modern Science Approaches**
**Course Syllabus, Style, Outline, Ground Rules**