

# Episode Fifty-Four: Reason Is Dependent On The Senses

Post by “Cassius” of January 17, 2021 at 6:56 AM

In connection with this episode we should keep in mind [this paragraph from Chapter X of Diogenes Laertius](#):

Quote

**31.** They reject dialectic as superfluous; holding that in their inquiries the physicists should be content to employ the ordinary terms for things.[43] Now in *The Canon* Epicurus affirms that our sensations and preconceptions and our feelings are the standards of truth; the Epicureans generally make perceptions of mental presentations [44] to be also standards. His own statements are also to be found in the *Summary* addressed to Herodotus and in the *Sovran Maxims*. Every sensation, he says, is devoid of reason and incapable of memory; for neither is it self-caused nor, regarded as having an external cause, can it add anything thereto or take anything therefrom. **32.** Nor is there anything which can refute sensations or convict them of error: one sensation cannot convict another and kindred sensation, for they are equally valid; nor can one sensation refute another which is not kindred but heterogeneous, for the objects which the two senses judge are not the same;[45] nor again can reason refute them, for reason is wholly dependent on sensation; nor can one sense refute another, since we pay equal heed to all. And the reality of separate perceptions guarantees[46] the truth of our senses. But seeing and hearing are just as real as feeling pain. Hence it is from plain facts that we must start when we draw inferences about the unknown.[47] For all our notions are derived from perceptions, either by actual contact or by analogy, or resemblance, or composition, with some slight aid from reasoning. And the objects presented to mad-men[48] and to people in dreams are true, for they produce effects - i.e. movements in the mind - which that which is unreal never does.

For the definition of "Dialectic" here is the [1911 Encyclopaedia Britannica](#):

Quote

**DIALECTIC**, or Dialectics (from Gr. διάλεκτος, discourse, debate; ἡ διαλεκτική, sc. τέχνη, the art of debate), a logical term, generally used in common parlance in a contemptuous sense for verbal or purely abstract disputation devoid of practical value.

According to Aristotle, Zeno of Elea "invented" dialectic, the art of disputation by question and answer, while Plato developed it metaphysically in connexion with his doctrine of "Ideas" as the art of analysing ideas in themselves and in relation to the ultimate idea of the Good (*Repub.* vii.). The special function of the so-called "Socratic dialectic" was to show the inadequacy of popular beliefs. Aristotle himself used "dialectic," as opposed to "science," for that department of mental activity which examines the presuppositions lying at the back of all the particular sciences. Each particular science has its own subject matter and special principles (ἴδια ἀρχαί) on which the superstructure of its special discoveries is based. The Aristotelian dialectic, however, deals with the universal laws (κοινὰ ἀρχαί) of reasoning, which can be applied to the particular arguments of all the sciences. The sciences, for example, all seek to define their own species; dialectic, on the other hand, sets forth the conditions which all definitions must satisfy whatever their subject matter. Again, the sciences all seek to educe general laws; dialectic investigates the nature of such laws, and the kind and degree of necessity to which they can attain. To this general subject matter Aristotle gives the name "Topics" (τόποι, *loci, communes loci*). "Dialectic" in this sense is the equivalent of "logic." Aristotle also uses the term for the science of probable reasoning as opposed to demonstrative reasoning (ἀποδεικτική). The Stoics divided λογική (logic) into rhetoric and dialectic, and from their time till the end of the middle ages dialectic was either synonymous with, or a part of, logic.

In modern philosophy the word has received certain special meanings. In Kantian terminology *Dialektik* is the name of that portion of the *Kritik d. reinen Vernunft* in which Kant discusses the impossibility of applying to "things-in-themselves" the principles which are found to govern phenomena. In the system of Hegel the word resumes its original Socratic sense, as the name of that intellectual process whereby the inadequacy of popular conceptions is exposed. Throughout its history, therefore, "dialectic" has been connected with that which is remote from, or alien to, unsystematic thought, with the a priori, or transcendental, rather than with the facts of common experience and material things.

Here is the [1911 Encyclopedia Britannica on "Logic"](#) (a very long article)

Quote

**LOGIC** (λογική, sc. τέχνη, the art of reasoning), the name given to one of the four main departments of philosophy, though its sphere is very variously delimited. The present article is divided into I. *The Problems of Logic*, II. *History*.

I. *The Problems of Logic*.

*Introduction*.—Logic is the science of the processes of inference. What, then, is inference? It is that mental operation which proceeds by combining two premises so as to cause a consequent conclusion. Some suppose that we may infer from one premise

by a so-called "immediate inference." But one premise can only reproduce itself in another form, e.g. all men are some animals; therefore some animals are men. It requires the combination of at least two premises to infer a conclusion different from both. There are as many kinds of inference as there are different ways of combining premises, and in the main three types:—

1. *Analogical Inference*, from particular to particular: e.g. border-war between Thebes and Phocis is evil; border-war between Thebes and Athens is similar to that between Thebes and Phocis; therefore, border-war between Thebes and Athens is evil.

2. *Inductive Inference*, from particular to universal: e.g. border-war between Thebes and Phocis is evil; all border-war is like that between Thebes and Phocis; therefore, all border-war is evil.

3. *Deductive or Syllogistic Inference*, from universal to particular, e.g. all border-war is evil; border-war between Thebes and Athens is border-war; therefore border-war between Thebes and Athens is evil.

In each of these kinds of inference there are three mental judgments capable of being expressed as above in three linguistic propositions; and the two first are the premises which are combined, while the third is the conclusion which is consequent on their combination. Each proposition consists of two terms, the subject and its predicate, united by the copula. Each inference contains three terms. In syllogistic inference the subject of the conclusion is the minor term, and its predicate the major term, while between these two extremes the term common to the two premises is the middle term, and the premise containing the middle and major terms is the major premise, the premise containing the middle and minor terms the minor premise. Thus in the example of syllogism given above, "border-war between Thebes and Athens" is the minor term, "evil" the major term, and "border-war" the middle term. Using S for minor, P for major and M for middle, and preserving these signs for corresponding terms in analogical and inductive inferences, we obtain the following formula of the three inferences:—

<i>Analogical.</i>	<i>Inductive.</i>	<i>Deductive or Syllogistic.</i>	
S <sup>1</sup> is P	S is P	Every	M is P
S <sup>2</sup> is similar to S <sup>1</sup>	Every M is similar to S		S is M
∴ S <sup>2</sup> is P.	∴ Every M is P.	∴	S is P.

Display More

Here is the [1911 Encyclopaedia Britannica on "Reason."](#)

Quote

**REASON** (Lat. *ratio*, through French *raison*), in philosophy, the faculty or process of drawing logical inferences. Thus we speak of man as essentially a rational animal, it being implied that man differs from all other animals in that he can consciously draw inferences from premises. It is, however, exceedingly difficult in this respect to draw an absolute distinction between men and animals, observation of which undoubtedly suggests that the latter have a certain power of making inferences. Between the higher animals and the lower types of mankind the distinction is so hard to draw that many psychologists argue that the difference is one of degree rather than of kind (see also [Instinct](#)). There can be little doubt, however, that inference by man differs from that of the brute creation in respect of self-consciousness, and, though there can be no doubt that some animals dream, it is difficult to find evidence for the presence of ideal images in the minds of any but the highest animals. In the nature of the case satisfactory conclusions as to the rationality which may be predicated of animals are impossible.

The term "reason" is also used in several narrower senses. Thus reason is opposed to sensation, perception, feeling, desire, as the faculty (the existence of which is denied by empiricists) by which fundamental truths are intuitively apprehended. These fundamental truths are the causes or "reasons" (ἀρχαί) of all derivative facts. With Kant, reason (*Vernunft*) is the power of synthesizing into unity, by means of comprehensive principles, the concepts provided by the intellect (*Verstand*). The reason which gives a priori principles Kant calls "Pure Reason" (cf. the *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*), as distinguished from the "Practical Reason" (*praktische Vernunft*) which is specially concerned with the performance of particular actions. In formal logic the drawing of inferences (frequently called "ratiocination," from Lat. *ratiocinari*, to use the reasoning faculty) is classified from Aristotle downwards as deductive (from generals to particulars) and inductive (from particulars to generals); see [Logic](#), [Induction](#), [Syllogism](#). In theology, reason, as distinguished from faith, is the human intelligence exercised upon religious truth whether by way of discovery or by way of explanation. The limits within which the reason may be used have been laid down differently in different churches and periods of thought: on the whole, modern Christianity, especially in the Protestant churches, tends to allow to reason a wide field, reserving, however, as the sphere of faith the ultimate (supernatural) truths of theology.

The Greek words for reason are νοῦς and λόγος, both vaguely used. In Aristotle the λόγος of a thing is its definition, including its formal cause, while the ultimate principles of a science are ἀρχαί, the "reasons" (in a common modern sense) which explain all its particular facts.<sup>[1]</sup> Nois in Plato and Aristotle is used both widely for all the meanings which "reason" can have, and strictly for the faculty which apprehends intuitively. Thus, in the Republic, van is the faculty which apprehends necessary truth, while δόξα (opinion) is concerned with phenomena.

For the Stoic and Neoplatonic uses of Λόγος, as also for those of Philo Judaeus and the Fathers, see [Logos](#).