

Lecture 5: Monism in Ontology

Monism. There exists one being only. The term "monism" was introduced in the 18th century by Christian von Wolff in his work *Logic* (1728).

Various kinds of monism can be distinguished: existence monism; priority monism; substance monism; and also: attributive monism; partial monism; property monism.

Views that are different from ontological (or metaphysical) monism are: metaphysical or ontological dualism, metaphysical or ontological pluralism

Pantheism means the opinion that God is identical with nature. In this perspective God does not have personal or anthropomorphic nature.

Representatives of monism:

Parmenides and Eleatic School

Zeno of Elea

George Berkeley (immaterialism, subjective idealism)

Karl Marx and Frederic Engels

The most important statements of **Parmenides**:

"There is a way which is and a way which is not" (a way of truth and a way of opinion)

"For thinking and being are the same"

Being exists and non-being does not exist

According to him, there is only one being, without diversity and any change. Being is eternal and of one nature.

Real being may be cognised in rational logic only.

Parmenides states that being is necessarily different from non-being. You can think about being only; it is impossible to think or express non-being.

Parmenides starts from the definition of being as something that exists and deduces everything about its nature. In this way he tries to prove that diversity and change are only sensible illusion.

Zeno of Elea

Paradox as a form of argumentation.

Paradox= A statement or proposition which, despite sound (or apparently sound) reasoning from acceptable premises, leads to a conclusion that seems logically unacceptable or self-contradictory. *'the liar paradox'* (source: Oxford Dictionary).

Zeno uses the indirect proofs.

The dichotomy paradox

"In Dichotomy Paradox, Zeno argued that a runner will never reach the stationary goal line on a straight racetrack. The reason is that the runner must first reach half the distance to the goal, but when there he must still cross half the remaining distance to the goal, but having done that the runner must cover half of the new remainder, and so on. If the goal is one meter away, the runner must cover a distance of 1/2 meter, then 1/4 meter, then 1/8 meter, and so on *ad infinitum*. The runner cannot reach the final goal, says Zeno. Why not? There are few traces of Zeno's reasoning here, but for reconstructions that give the strongest reasoning, we may say that the runner will not reach the final goal because there is too far to run, the sum is actually infinite. The Standard Solution argues instead that the sum of this infinite geometric series is one, not infinity." (source IEP = Internet Encyclopaedia of Philosophy).

The Arrow

“Think of how you would distinguish an arrow that is stationary in space from one that is flying through space, given that you look only at a snapshot (an instantaneous photo) of them. As Aristotle explains, from Zeno’s “assumption that time is composed of moments,” a moving arrow must occupy a space equal to itself during any moment. That is, during any indivisible moment or instant it is at the place where it is. But places do not move. So, if in each moment, the arrow is occupying a space equal to itself, then the arrow is not moving *in* that moment. The reason it is not moving is that it has no time in which to move; it is simply there at the place. It cannot move during the moment because that motion would require an even smaller unit of time, but the moment is indivisible. The same reasoning holds for any other moment during the so-called “flight” of the arrow. So, the arrow is never moving.”
(Source: IEP)

Paradox of Achilles and tortoise

Achilles, whom we can assume is the fastest runner of antiquity, is racing to catch the tortoise that is slowly crawling away from him. Both are moving along a linear path at constant speeds. In order to catch the tortoise, Achilles will have to reach the place where the tortoise presently is. However, by the time Achilles gets there, the tortoise will have crawled to a new location. Achilles will then have to reach this new location. By the time Achilles reaches that location, the tortoise will have moved on to yet another location, and so on forever. Zeno claims Achilles will never catch the tortoise. This argument shows, he believes, that anyone who believes Achilles will succeed in catching the tortoise and who believes more generally that motion is physically possible is the victim of illusion (Source: IEP)

George Berkely (1685-1753) = Irish philosopher, bishop of Cloyne, representative of the modern empiricism, subjective idealism and immaterialism. His famous sentence states, that *esse est percipi* (to be is to be perceived)

Immaterialism, a metaphysical doctrine denying the objective existence of matter; the opinion that matter has no objective existence; according to immaterialism material things exist only as mental perceptions or ideas.

Premise 1: I have an impression: I can feel some impressions now, eg. I am seeing a white flat (plane, area)

Premise 2: Each impression of the white flat starts when there exists a white wall only

Conclusion: there is the white wall in this room.

Berkley uses also John Locke’s distinction between objective and subjective properties (features). It means, he criticises it showing that each so called objective property is necessarily linked to subjective one. Example: shape belongs to the objective properties (colour is subjective). Are we in a position to imagine a shape without any colour? (colourless is also a colour, transparent is also a colour)

Karl Marx and Frederic Engels – Historical materialism

Historical materialism is based on the idea that ‘Mankind must first of all eat, drink, have shelter and clothing before it can pursue politics, science, art, religion etc.’

The world and history develop dialectically

Dialectic is based on contradictions.

Thesis – antithesis – synthesis

According to Marx and Engels, human history is composed of 5 periods

- (1) Primitive Communism
- (2) Slavery
- (3) Feudalism
- (4) Capitalism
- (5) Communism

“Men are not free arbiters of their productive forces - which are the basis of all their history - for every productive force is an acquired force, the product of former activity... Because of the simple fact that every succeeding generation finds itself in possession of the productive forces acquired by the preceding generation, which serve it as the raw material for new production, a coherence arises in human history, there is formed a history of humanity which is all the more a history of humanity since the productive forces of man, and therefore his social relations have become more developed... Their [men’s] material relations form the basis of all their relations.’

“In the social production of their life, men enter into definite relations that are indispensable and independent of their will, relations of production which correspond to a definite stage of development of their material productive forces. The sum total of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society, the real foundation, on which rises a legal and political superstructure and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness. The mode of production of material life conditions the social, political and intellectual life process in general. It is not the consciousness of men that determines their being, but, on the contrary, their social being that determines their consciousness. At a certain stage of their development, the material productive forces of society come in conflict with the existing relations of production, or - what is but a legal expression for the same thing - with the property relations within which they have been at work hitherto. From forms of development of the productive forces these relations turn into their fetters. Then begins an epoch of social revolution. With the change of the economic foundation the entire immense superstructure is more or less rapidly transformed. In considering such transformations a distinction should always be made between the material transformation of the economic conditions of production, which can be determined with the precision of natural science, and the legal, political, religious, aesthetic or philosophic - in short, ideological forms in which men become conscious of this conflict and fight it out. Just as our opinion of an individual is not based on what he thinks of himself, so can we not judge of such a period of transformation by its own consciousness; on the contrary, this consciousness must be explained rather from the contradictions of material life, from the existing conflict between the social productive forces and the relations of production”.

Key words of historical materialism:

- Means of productions
- Relations of production
- Social-economic basis
- Low-ideological superstructure

Laws of History

1. The law of compatibility between the productive forces and the relations of production.
2. The law of compatibility between basis and superstructure.

3. The law of class struggle.

The first sentence in the “Manifesto of communist party”

A spectre is haunting Europe – the spectre of communism.

“The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles. Freeman and slave, patrician and plebeian, lord and serf, guild-master and journeyman, in a word, oppressor and oppressed, stood in constant opposition to one another.... The modern bourgeois society that has sprouted from the ruins of feudal society has not done away with class antagonisms. It has but established new classes, new conditions of oppression, new forms of struggle in place of the old ones.

By bourgeoisie is meant the class of modern capitalists, owners of the means of social production and employers of wage labour. By proletariat, the class of modern wage labourers who, having no means of production of their own, are reduced to selling their labour power in order to live

“Workers of all countries, unite!”