

But if knowledge is not
certain then:
What is truth?
What is knowledge?
What is the crisis we are
talking about?

Let me begin with my
favourite
“Tally Ho Wisdom”

Meaning?

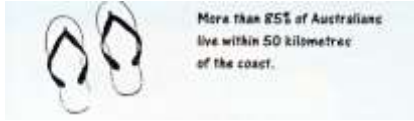
- The average Australian will consume ...



- Average Australian?
- Who is this excellent average Australian? You? Me? The next door neighbour?
- When is she consuming? Where is he?

Interpretation?

- Why a picture of thongs accompany this excellent *information*? Is there a connection between thongs and beach?



- More than 85% of Australians live within 50 kilometres of...
- Why? Is Australia a small island surrounded by...?

So, what can we learn...?



Is this knowledge?

- The 'dingo fence' in Australia is the longest fence in the world,



- & about twice as long as the Great Wall of China



What is the 'common measure'?

Euthyphro

Paradeigma – παράδειγμα [example]
Metron – μέτρον [criterion, measure of]

Socrates' search was to know what is the human measure of ...
...piety, justice, good, *aretē* [excellence], *andreia* [courage]

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Euthyphro: Of course (Plato, 1997, 6b–d [6–7]).

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Euthyphro: That is the difference, Socrates, about those subjects (Plato, 1997, 6b–d [6–7]).

So, how can we *know*

What is the measure of human knowledge?
Is there any?

Is this a sure way towards knowledge, avoiding to “make us angry and hostile to each other”?

- The ‘dingo fence’ in Australia is the longest fence in the world,



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Common measure?

- Not culture
- Not history
- Not ‘labour’ involved in building these two different ‘fences’
- Not a different meaning of those two structures

It is simply ‘length’

The End of Theory: The Data Deluge Makes the Scientific Method Obsolete

“This is a world where massive amounts of data and applied mathematics replace every other tool that might be brought to bear. Out with every theory of human behavior, from linguistics to sociology. Forget taxonomy, ontology, and psychology. Who knows why people do what they do? The point is they do it, and we can track and measure it with unprecedented fidelity. With enough data, the numbers speak for themselves”

(Anderson, 2008).

The question is: **“Do ‘numbers’
speak for themselves?”**

This ‘modern wisdom’ is what I
try to understand.

This is where the crisis of meaning
comes in...where the history of
thinking is important...where
Euthyphro is indispensable.

“The present moment shrinks to a
fleeting *point* in time, devoid of
heirs and free of goals. The
present no longer trails things past
and future along with it”

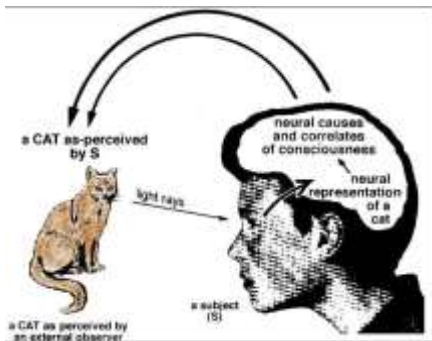
(Harr, 2017, 4, italics in original).

- No history
- No utopia
- No future – except the acceleration
of innovative technologies that
supposedly solve all problems of
humanity
- Virtual future is all we have left...

Yet...is it all?

Where is the human meaning in all this onslaught of numbers / data / algorithms that supposedly fix everything?

Some of the (many) questions still 'linger':
What *is* 'meaning', what *is* 'truth', what is 'knowledge', what is 'information' in our bright world of neural pathways and firing neurons?



Where are humans in
this new bright world of
technology, data, neural
pathways and firing
neurons?

Phenomenology

- We bracket out our presuppositions
- We question the tradition and the inheritance of our ideas
- We acknowledge that ideas have a long history to which we are now blind
- We stress the situational knowledge
- We accept that knowledge is relational and relative to our situation
- NOT RELATIVE *per se!* – to believe so, we are already caught in the modern psychologised understand where all our knowledge is subjective, belonging to us alone, where beliefs are individual and there is no truth that we can agree upon...
- Why do we think this way?
Why we accept that thinking is in our head and the world is outside of us?

The Cartesian “I” (brought about
by the modern science)

- The shift to the **certainty of knowledge**:
the evil genius leads to ‘I am certain that I doubt’ = ‘certainty of doubt’:
- If I doubt, I must think
- If I think, I must ‘be’
- Hence – from doubting to thinking and then to being:
‘I think therefore I am’

Descartes and his search for the ground of **certainty**:

Split between **thinking** – [*res cogitans*] later called ‘subject’ and **the world** – [*res extensa*] later called ‘object’

Plato: *Apologia*

In many ways, Plato was also interested in knowing and human meaningful experience. Yet, his conceptual understanding was different.

Note how his focus is different...



“...[my accusers], ...persuaded you and accused me quite falsely, saying that there is a man called **Socrates, a wise man, a student of all things in the sky and below the earth**, who makes the worse argument the stronger. Those who spread that rumor, gentlemen, are my dangerous accusers, for **their hearers believe that those who study these things do not even believe in the gods**” (Plato, 1997, 18b-c).

Why?

- Only Gods can see all at once
- Only Gods can know everything
- How we, humans, could know all 'reality'; "all things in the sky and below the earth"?
- Those who believe that you can reach knowledge of all those things pretend that they can know as much as Gods, hence, they "do not even believe in the gods".

Apollo's oracular message

"What is probable, gentlemen, is that in fact the god is wise and that his oracular response meant that human wisdom is worth little or nothing, and that when he says this man, Socrates, he is using my name as an example, as if he said: 'This man among you, mortals, is wisest who, like Socrates, understands that his wisdom is worthless'" (Plato, 1997, 23b).

Socratic 'learned ignorance'

Knowledge and Information

- Never before have we had access to so much *information* we do now in the 21st century
- This explosion of information is presented in the forms of messages, surveys, reports, stories, tweets, news, which we are guided to simplify by using RSS feeds (Really Simple Syndication or Rich Site Summary)
- There is an unprecedented accumulation of data, taglines, graphs, numbers, algorithms, tables and targets, appearing indiscriminately in different media

Why we do not question this explosion tied to a disappearance of ideas history critical thinking?

- What are the presuppositions that we simply take for granted?

How can we start questioning the present?

- Rethink the idea of truth
- History of ideas
- Knowledge versus Information
- Stress the importance of a dialogue – as a critical argument between friends
- Plato's *Euthyphro*

Side-note

- Arguing is not screaming; it is derived from the Latin word *arguere* = 'to make clear'
- To critique is not to negatively dismiss the opponents but to judge their reasons that they present and inquire into their 'presuppositions'
- Platonic dialogues

Euthyphro

- Socrates aim is to question inherited tradition – shared by Euthyphro and Athenians (*miasma*)
- To invite his interlocutors (in this dialogue only Euthyphro) to examine their long held beliefs that have ceased to be supported by mythical thinking that was disintegrating
- To start thinking about the new ground of thinking in the Greek City State – *polis*
- To show the problematic nature of 'truth' presented by poets (mythological thinking); sophists

Are we different today?

- Market knows all...
- Technology will solve all our problems...
- The state is an oppressive power we need to eliminate...
- Social media are connecting us with each other...
- Corporations' taxes need to be cut down to sustain the growth in economy
- Indeed, economy is the only discourse that is 'legitimate today'...

Euthyphro

- Euthyphro: "What's new, Socrates, to make you leave your usual haunts in the Lyceum and spend your time here by the king-archon's court?" (2a).
- Socrates: "on the ground that I create new gods while not believing in the old gods, he has indicted me for their sake, as he puts it" (3b).
- Euthyphro: "The same is true in my case. Whenever I speak of divine matters in the assembly and foretell the future, they laugh me down as if I were crazy; and yet I have foretold nothing that did not happen. Nevertheless, they envy all of us who do this. One need not worry about them, but meet them head-on" (3c).

"they laugh me down as if I were
crazy"

"Greeks continued to be preoccupied by tales of men and women who murdered their parents and abused their children. These unnatural deeds, even if committed unwittingly, contained a contagious power (*miasma*) that had an independent life of its own. Until it had been purged by the sacrificial death of the wrongdoer, society would be chronically infected by plague and catastrophe" (Armstrong, 2006, 55).

There are many analyses of this
dialogue...

- I simply concentrate on a few points and not a dialogue as such. Usually it is said that:
- The aim is analyse 'piety'
- To show that Socrates should not be charged with impiety
- To critique the concept of mythological account of piety that Euthyphro holds
- To show that Socrates questioning displays the true piety

Euthyphro's charge:
His father is a murderer

How does he know?

- He has access to divine knowledge
- Socrates: what do you know
What is piety
What is justice
What is aretē
What is

And, as in every later dialogues

- The 'personal (as we would say today), the empirical example stands for all

"I say that **the pious is to do what I am doing now, to prosecute the wrongdoer**, be it about murder or temple robbery or anything else, whether the wrongdoer is your father or your mother or anyone else; not to prosecute is impious. And observe, Socrates, that **I can cite powerful evidence that the law is so**. I have already said to others that such actions are right, not to favor the ungodly, whoever they are. **These people themselves believe that Zeus is the best and most just of the gods, yet they agree that he bound his father because he unjustly swallowed his sons, and that he in turn castrated his father for similar reasons**. But they are angry with me because I am prosecuting my father for his wrongdoing. **They contradict themselves in what they say about the gods and about me**" (5e–6).

Gods

- Fight
- Disagree with each other
-
- but...

- Euthyphro is serving Gods and upholds piety

Socrates: "Consider this: Is the pious being loved by the gods because it is pious, or is it pious because it is being loved by the gods?" (10a)

Socrates: "So there is also something loved and – a different thing – something loving" (10a).

And so it goes? What is justice?

What is this unity that all particular multiplicities can be explained by it?

What can give us a point that we can agree on?

Idealisation

- In our everyday understanding, we encounter typical objects... [generalisation]
- Plato's extension of generalisation into idealisation: to account for *conceptual* understanding: line in a sand... idealised; from it we can conceptualise ... a line, a triangle, infinity, justice
- Modern science: formalisation (the problem of formal ontology)

Use a simple example: what is a triangle?

- So, what makes a triangle *to be* a triangle?
- Is it something we can see, touch, own?
- Is it an idea we have? Is it a concept?
- Is it something that *does not depend on us*?

A Definition of Triangle

A closed figure with three sides that form three interior angles, sum of which is 180 degrees

What is the common measure
for us to understand, debate,
agree or disagree with reasons
presented...

Mathematics | data |
algorithms?

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“So, okay, what’s the alternative? If the world *isn’t* supposed to be a dazzling acceleration of the postwar generation’s techno-utopian fantasies, then ... what? Between futurist manifest destiny and apocalyptic ruin, is there another way?

...Is it possible to think outside the box of your ideology?

Or is *ideology* the box and you just have to work at opening it? Maybe it’s too late for us and the best we can do is to raise a generation less shackled by outmoded dreams, free to imagine something ... else. ... We need new futures”

(Mastai, 2017, 384–385, italics in original).

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