

Reason and the Divine

Week three: the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries

This week we will be looking at the development of philosophy in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The modern period in philosophy conventionally begins with the work of Descartes in the mid-1600s, and such is the influence of the development of philosophy over the next one hundred and fifty years, until the death of Immanuel Kant, that knowledge of this period is considered vital to a proper philosophical education to this day. Our focus is of course the relationship between reason and the divine, and so we will not have to enter into all the intricacies of the period, but we will still have plenty to keep us busy. However, since this period also encompasses the scientific revolution, we will begin with what may seem to be a digression, and spend a little time looking at the so-called 'founder of modern science', Galileo Galilei.

I

Everyone knows the story of Galileo, of how he was condemned by the church for propounding the heliocentric theory, that is the view that the earth moves round the sun, proposed by Nicholas Copernicus in the mid-1500s, as opposed to the geocentric or Ptolemaic view that the sun moves round the earth.

Looking back now, it is obvious to us that the heliocentric theory is right; although the sun is not positioned at the centre of the universe, as Galileo believed, nevertheless, the earth does move round the sun, along with the other planets. Furthermore, it seems obvious to us that at least in scientific matters such as this, we should believe according to the dictates of observation and experiment, not religious doctrine. Whether the earth orbits the sun or vice versa is straightforwardly a scientific question, not a religious one, and the whole Galileo affair is usually cited as the prime example of the obstinate and short-sighted authoritarianism of the church at the time.

Unfortunately, matters were not quite so simple. Galileo was condemned, that is true. In 1616, Cardinal Bellarmine, acting on directives from the Inquisition, delivered him an order not to "hold or defend" the idea that the Earth moves and the Sun stands still, which Galileo more or less ignored. Perhaps he could see which way the wind was blowing, for by the time Galileo published his *Dialogue Concerning the Two Chief World Systems*, comparing the Copernican and Ptolemaic viewpoints, in 1632, it was with the permission of Pope Urban VIII and with full authorisation from the Inquisition. The book was ostensibly neutral between the two systems, but was perceived by many as being in favour of Copernicus, not least because Galileo named the advocate of the Ptolemaic system Simplicio, which has the connotation of 'simpleton' in Italian. Worse, Galileo put into the mouth of Simplicio the views of his erstwhile mentor, Urban VIII. Under increasing political pressure, and doubtless a little miffed at the mile taken by Galileo, the

pope allowed Galileo to be placed on trial in 1633, where he was found “vehemently suspect of heresy” and placed under house arrest for the rest of his life.

So Galileo’s condemnation was largely the result of political pressures on a pope who was initially sympathetic, if not to heliocentrism, at least to Galileo’s right to discuss it, compounded by Galileo’s, maybe unintentional, lack of diplomacy. But Galileo’s opponents were not simply reactionary, nor was Galileo the practitioner of an obviously superior rational scientific practice, and his views were at the time genuinely and understandably controversial.

Galileo himself had felt the need to respond to the passages of scripture that seemingly contradicted the heliocentric view. *Psalms* and *Chronicles* say that “the world is firmly established, it cannot be moved”, and “the Lord set the earth on its foundations; it can never be moved”. Likewise, *Ecclesiastes* states that “the sun rises and sets and returns to its place”. Galileo responded to these passages by citing the work of St Augustine, who claimed that not every passage of scripture is to be taken literally, although it is probably fair to say that such an approach to scripture had largely fallen out of favour by this time, and probably didn’t go down too well with some of his contemporaries.

We should also remember that the scientific approach was not firmly established at this time; indeed it was the work of Galileo himself that did so much to inaugurate the scientific revolution. Particularly noteworthy is the novel way in which Galileo mixed observation with mathematics. It seems so clear to us now that science will be mathematical that it is hard to recognise this for the innovative proposal that it was at the time. It is not irrational to wonder whether bold and innovative proposals are really going to lead to anything worthwhile.

Not only that, but even on scientific grounds, the evidence for heliocentrism was weak. Heliocentrism has initially been proposed by, you’ve guessed it, the Greeks, who rejected it in favour of a superior geocentric view. When Copernicus published his heliocentric theory in 1543, it was far worse than the Ptolemaic system at predicting the positions of planets in the sky. This was largely due to Copernicus continuing to insist, with Ptolemy, that the planets must move in circles, and this because the circle is the perfect shape. So bad was Copernicus’ theory at matching up with the observational evidence that Copernicus himself did not seem to think it was true, presenting it instead as merely an experiment in thought. Not until the work of Kepler, who suggested in the early 1600s that the planets move in ellipses rather than circles, did the Copernican theory even approach the Ptolemaic theory in terms of observational adequacy. Things had improved a little by Galileo’s time, but not to the extent that the modified Copernican theory was obviously superior.

Furthermore, there were other bits of evidence that seemed to tell decisively against Copernicus and Galileo. For a start, under the heliocentric theory, the earth moves (obviously enough). But it doesn’t seem to move. When one is on a horse, or traveling in a carriage, one has a sensation of movement. Surely if the earth was moving through space, we should have that sense of movement all the time. And there is this more

sophisticated argument. Suppose one were to drop an object, a cannonball say, from the top of a tower. Surely, if the earth moves, then by the time the cannonball hits the ground, the earth and the tower with it would have moved a certain distance and the cannonball would hit the ground a way away from the base of the tower. But this does not happen – the cannonball hits the ground right next to the base of the tower, just as one would expect if the earth does not move.

It would not be until the work of Newton that these anomalies would be resolved. Of course, when they were, they were resolved scientifically; my point is not that the church did not interfere in matters it had no right to adjudicate on, but rather that instead of the church dogmatically insisting on its orthodox view in the face of irrefutable evidence, the case was much more one of denouncing a speculative theory arrived at by a new and controversial mode of thought for which there was little evidence, and much evidence against, a theory that was, in addition, contrary to the teachings of the faith.

The Galileo incident is not then the kind of imperious use of authority one saw in the high middle ages; instead it is perhaps symptomatic of the birth pangs of a genuinely new way of looking at the world, mathematically based science, that went on to revolutionise human thought.

II

If it is Galileo that is often viewed as the father of modern science, the father of modern philosophy is usually taken to be Renee Descartes, who lived from 1596 to 1650. He did pioneering work in mathematics, physics, and physiology as well as philosophy, and is the author of perhaps the most famous philosophical quote ever, *cogito ergo sum*, or 'I think therefore I am'.

As standardly described, Descartes completely overturned the scholastic philosophy that had gone before him. Although it is true that there is much in Descartes that is new, there is also more continuity with what went before than is commonly realised. The details of the continuity need not concern us; our task will be to see what is new in the framework that Descartes developed.

Descartes published his *Meditations on First Philosophy* in 1641. It is a delightful (and short) work, written with a clarity that still shines forth as a model of philosophical prose. The story is that it was composed after Descartes spent a chilly November night in an isolated cottage, where he was plagued by nightmares and torments of the soul. The more one reads the work, the more one recognises how carefully it is structured, and so we have every reason to think it was not the simple transcription of the thoughts of a cold and hungry man far from home; nevertheless, the fact that it is written in the first person, and the occasional flash of biographical detail, both conspire to give it an immediacy that is rare indeed in a philosophical work. In it, he attempts not only to prove the existence of God and the immortality of the soul, but also to provide rational support for the developing scientific viewpoint. Mindful of Galileo's recent treatment at the hands of the

church, he is anxious to stress that his results are entirely in accordance with the faith, but even so, his method of attaining those results is little short of revolutionary.

The Meditations begins with the adult Descartes reflecting that many of the opinions he held in his childhood have turned out to be false, and that there is no guarantee that what he now believes as an adult is any more free from error. He resolves, therefore, to doubt everything that it is possible to doubt, and to treat whatever it is possible to doubt as false, in order to see what he is left with, and so rebuild his opinions on firm, indubitable foundations. This is his Method of Doubt, and it proceeds by stages.

Firstly, Descartes recognises that his senses occasionally deceive him (he uses the example of the stick in the water) and since, as he says, it is wise never to trust completely what has deceived you in the past, particular judgements made on the basis of his senses are called into doubt. This may provide grounds for doubting that the stick really is straight, but surely it would be madness to doubt that he really is sitting in his dressing gown in this room by the fire. (This is one of those delightful biographical flashes.) Nevertheless, Descartes continues, it is possible that he may be dreaming. At the very least, he is unable to be certain that he is not dreaming – after all, many has been the time when he has been dreaming, quite convinced that he was somewhere other than in his bed asleep.

Finally, Descartes introduces his most powerful reason for doubt, the possibility that there may be an evil demon intent on deceiving him about everything he takes to be true. It is important to recognise that Descartes is not asserting that there *is* an evil demon, merely that if there was such a demon, and that demon was doing its job properly, Descartes would not be able to tell the difference. So far, then, his careful use of reason has seemed to lead him to the conclusion that he can't be certain about anything at all.

Except one thing. For even if there was an evil demon deceiving him, he would have to exist in order to be deceived, and so he can be certain that he exists. Furthermore, since the demon could deceive him even as to the existence of his own body, whilst not being able to deceive him as to his existence, he can know, allegedly, that his body is not essential to his existence, and that he exists essentially as a thinking thing. This is the context in which Descartes makes his statement *cogito ergo sum*, I think therefore I am, although it should be mentioned that this phrase occurs in the same context in another work, not *The Meditations*, where the point of certainty is expressed instead as 'I am; I exist'.

There are two large points to be made about all this. Firstly, it must be emphasised that Descartes does not rest content with this extreme scepticism, but that he goes on in the rest of *The Meditations* to rebuild our knowledge on the basis of the certainty that he discerns in the cogito. Briefly, he takes it that his certainty that he exists gives him licence to rummage around in his own mind, and one of the ideas he finds there is the idea of God. Using essentially the same ontological argument that we saw Anselm make last week, Descartes then argues that because he has the idea of God, God exists, and finally since a benevolent God would not allow him to be deceived so fundamentally

about his nature and the world around him, he can once again attain the certainty in the senses that the possibility of the evil demon seemed to rob him of.

But things do not return to quite the point from which they began. A loving God would not allow Descartes to fall into error as long as he uses his reason carefully, but he must make every effort to see things, as Descartes puts it, 'clearly and distinctly'. Thus, we should always try to justify our beliefs – God does not provide a licence for sloppy or hasty thinking; reasoning carefully about the nature of the physical world at least involves the kind of reliance on observation and experiment that we now recognise as scientific.

Not only this, but the very point of certainty that survived the hypothesis of the evil demon, that he exists essentially as a thinking thing, allows Descartes to assert that his mind is, in one sense, separate from his body, that it exists, not as one other physical thing, but rather as immaterial substance. Although Descartes quite sensibly asserts that our existence as human beings is as an 'intimate union' of mind and body, nevertheless, the world is seen to contain two very different and irreconcilable substances. The essence of body (where by 'body' Descartes doesn't mean just human bodies, but physical objects in general) is to take up space, and what is made of this material substance or matter, must be studied by the methods of science; the essence of mind is thought, and since it is not part of the physical world, it cannot be approached by the methods of science. Descartes attempts to pull off the trick of arguing that we must use scientific methods in discovering truths about the physical world, whilst placing the mind (and God of course) beyond that physical world, thus, by the use of philosophical reason, carving out a distinct realm for scientific investigation that ensures that that investigation does not threaten the truths of religion.

The second large point to make, however, is that Descartes' method, although in his hands reaching results entirely in conformity with faith, suggests that religious truths are to be comprehended through the use of reason, and undermines authority as a basis of knowledge. For the first time since ancient Greece, human reason is set free to roam at will, a point that many of his contemporaries saw very well. Because of this, his works were banned in many universities across Europe on and off throughout the seventeenth century. But such bans couldn't disguise the genuine intellectual advantages of the Cartesian philosophy, and the space Descartes opened up for thinkers to use reason to reach even conclusions at variance with religious orthodoxy was very soon explored by other philosophical voyagers.

III

Perhaps the most daring of such seventeenth-century philosophical voyagers was the Jewish Dutch thinker, Baruch d'Espinoza, better known by the Latinized Benedict Spinoza. His first published work was a commentary and criticism of Descartes work, and whilst his thought moved away in many fundamental respects from Descartes, he never quite lost his Cartesian inspiration, in particular in his determination to follow

through Descartes' use of the so-called 'geometrical method', the proving of propositions from carefully stated axioms, much like the geometrical work of Euclid.

Spinoza was born into the Jewish community of Amsterdam in 1632. He enjoyed a conventional Jewish education, and may even have been destined for the rabbinate, but in 1655, at the age of 23, he was pronounced *cherem*, forbidden, excommunicated if you like, for his views on the immortality of the soul and the authenticity of the Hebrew bible. We still have the text of his ban, which goes like this.

Cursed be he by day and cursed be he by night; cursed be he when he lies down and cursed be he when he rises up. Cursed be he when he goes out and cursed be he when he comes in. The Lord will not spare him, but then the anger of the Lord and his jealousy shall smoke against that man, and all the curses that are written in this book shall lie upon him, and the Lord shall blot out his name from under heaven.

It is said that shortly before this was read out before the congregation, Rabbi Mortera offered not to proceed as long as Spinoza occasionally showed his face in the synagogue, to which offer Spinoza reportedly replied, "in return for the trouble you have taken to teach me the Hebrew language, allow me to teach you to excommunicate".

After his ban, Spinoza became, nominally, a Christian, although the views he continued to espouse, most notably in his masterwork *The Ethics*, were no more acceptable to his new religion. Not published until after his death, and only then anonymously, *The Ethics* is a remarkable work, reaching profound and almost mystical conclusions through a framework of the most rigorous application of the geometrical method ever attempted. Every numbered proposition that is asserted is derived from prior propositions, ultimately derived from a short list of axioms, and definitions of a small number of important terms, such as 'substance' and 'God'.

In contrast to Descartes' dualism, Spinoza insists there can be only one substance, and this is to be called *Deus sive natura*, God or nature. This identification of God with nature has led Spinoza to be called a pantheist by some, but since he thereby denies the existence of a God separate from his creation, he is just as justifiably called an atheist, the tag that stuck to him most forcefully. It can seem somewhat absurd to label someone for whom everything is God an atheist, and this was no doubt a convenient way of attacking someone whose views diverged in the most extreme way imaginable from religious orthodoxy, but it is I suppose easy to see someone who identifies God with nature as saying that the natural world is all there is.

There were plenty who saw the new Cartesianism as pregnant with atheism, or at least a problematic deism. The new scientific world view, first rigorously propounded by Descartes, saw the physical universe as a giant mechanism. All that happens in this mechanical universe can be explained in terms of the action of its smallest parts, and scientific explanation at this time is viewed precisely as the breaking down of complex systems into their constituents. It is precisely this kind of mechanical explanation of the human mind, of course, that Descartes denied with his dualism, and it has to be said that the mechanistic programme was never carried out with anything approaching rigour even for the physical universe. No less a figure than Isaac Newton, who did so much to

vindicate the scientific approach at the end of the seventeenth century, was not able to eradicate 'action at a distance' from his theories. His conception of gravity is not one that can be explained in mechanical terms, and the 'occult' properties of gravity (for which Newton was much criticised at the time) were only satisfactorily explained by Einstein two hundred years later in 1905.

Furthermore, although Newton was able to describe the movement of the planets with unprecedented accuracy, he wasn't able to explain how they got moving in the first place. Indeed, the so-called problem of angular momentum is still a problem in physics to this day. This problem seemed to many at the time to leave a role for God in getting the whole mechanism going in the first place, for winding up the clock as it were, even if the divine watchmaker then had little to do but leave the whole thing to slowly wind down.

But there were those who viewed this as the thin end of the wedge. For this picture of the world seems to push God to the edge of things. This deist God is not intimately involved in his creation, and it is hard to understand how such a God could intervene, in response to prayer for example.

The Irishman George Berkeley, Bishop of Cloyne (1685-1753), proposed to meet this danger with theory of immaterialism. That is, faced with Descartes' dualism of material and immaterial substance, Berkeley proposed to dispense with physical matter. All that exists are minds and the ideas they contain, as well as God, of course. Further, he had the chutzpah to assert that this view was entirely in accordance with common sense. There are two ways in which he argued this. Firstly, in Berkeley's system, God is required to explain why it is that we experience an orderly world, rather than a chaotic or self-serving series of experiences. Indeed, God is required to explain why it is that things continue to exist when we are not perceiving them, which would otherwise be a consequence of Berkeley's slogan that *esse est percipi*, to be is to be perceived. As the rather charming and well-known limerick by Ronald Knox has it,

There was a young man who said "God
Must find it exceedingly odd
To think that the tree
Should continue to be
When there's no one about in the quad"

To which some anonymous wit produced the reply,

Dear Sir: Your astonishment's odd;
I am always about in the quad.
And that's why the tree
Will continue to be
Since observed by, Yours faithfully, God

So, rather than being pushed to the sidelines, God is placed firmly once more at the centre of things, as common sense according to Berkeley so firmly demands, continually sustaining the world as experienced in existence, as the theologians had always maintained.

To explain the second way in which Berkeley claimed his immaterialism as common sense will take a little explanation, but it will be worth it since it will also help us to understand the viewpoints of the final two philosophers we will look at this evening, David Hume and Immanuel Kant.

All the thinkers we are looking at this evening, from Descartes onwards, accepted the so-called theory of ideas. This is the claim that to be aware of something, a table in front of you for example, is to be, in the first instance, aware of an idea in your mind, in this case, the idea of a table. So the table causes the idea of the table to be present in your mind, and it is this that constitutes your awareness. What is true of tables is true of your experience in general of course. The problem is that, if you have an idea in your mind, you have no way of knowing for sure what caused it – you cannot somehow look beyond the idea to see if it was really caused by a table or by something else. It was precisely this fact that Descartes exploited with his evil demon – the demon deceives you by causing, for example, table ideas to occur in your mind when there are no tables around.

This theory of ideas was thought to be required to explain hallucinations and visual illusions, for example our old friend the stick in the water. But it does seem to mean that the existence of the world around us will always be open to some kind of doubt, even as we seem to be perceptually aware of it. It was this inherent scepticism that Berkeley found repugnant to common sense. Common sense does not take the existence of the everyday world of chairs, tables, and so on to be at all open to doubt, but this is inevitable says Berkeley just so long as that world of chairs and tables is taken to be independent of our minds. As he complained, “philosophers kick up a dust and then complain that they cannot see”. According to his immaterialism, there are no independently existing chairs and tables for us to be doubtful of, chairs and tables are simply ideas in the mind, and the existence of those is not in doubt.

No-one agreed with Berkeley that his immaterialism was just common sense, but it is not easy to refute. Samuel Johnson famously said, “I refute it thus” and kicked a stone, and whilst you can see Johnson’s point, a little reflection will show that it actually says nothing against Berkeley, for not only the stone at rest but the stone in motion, and your foot, and the slight throbbing in your toes, are all ideas in the mind and can be comfortably accommodated by Berkeley’s theory.

David Hume’s response to this line of argument was that, in making any claims about the true nature of reality, Berkeley had gone too far. About such metaphysical matters, we could know precisely nothing. For Hume (1711-1776) human knowledge could be divided into two, ‘matters of fact’, that is the truths of everyday experience and science, that could be known through experience, and ‘relations of ideas’, the ways in which our ideas were related, which could be known without experience, but didn’t produce any new knowledge of the way the world was. An example of the kind of thing that could be known by relations of ideas are the very boring propositions ‘a brown cow is brown’, and ‘all bachelors are unmarried men’. The trouble with metaphysics is that it suggests we

can know truths about the world, albeit very abstract truths, without relying on experience, but instead using just reason.

For Hume, this circumscribed very severely the results that philosophy could hope to achieve. Instead of being able to answer the question, 'do material objects exist' for example, all that philosophers could do is explain why we come to believe that material objects exist. Hume's answer, in brief, was that we do not believe such things on the basis of reason, for reason can never pretend to such extravagant results, but instead we believe on the basis of a "custom or habit of the mind".

Given all this, it is no surprise to find Hume arguing in his *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*, that we can have no knowledge whatsoever of the divine. Reason simply cannot get us that far. But Hume combined this line of thought, familiar from the neo-Platonists fifteen hundred years previously, with a comparable suspicion of faith and revelation. As he said so eloquently in his *Enquiry Into Human Understanding*, "If we take in our hand any volume of divinity or school metaphysics, for instance, let us ask, Does it contain any abstract reasoning concerning quantity or number? No. Does it contain any experimental reasoning concerning matter of fact and existence? No. Commit it then to the flames, for it can contain nothing but sophistry and illusion."

In his *Dialogues* Hume develops arguments against the idea of a designer God a full century before Darwin. Not that Hume anticipates the theory of evolution – he merely points out the weakness of the analogy between the universe and a watch (then the most popular metaphor for a universe requiring a designer, and still a favourite with creationists today) – the universe may be a bit like a watch, but not that much really, and besides we are only inclined to view a watch as requiring a designer because it fulfils so well its manifest purpose, to tell the time. It begs the question to assume that the universe has a purpose, and even if it did, how would we know what it was, and even if we knew what it was, how would we reliably tell whether the universe was fulfilling it or not.

Kant, being a pious German rationalist, as opposed to an atheist Scots empiricist, found Hume's pessimistic prognosis for the possibility of metaphysics repugnant, even as he felt the power of his arguments. Kant was professor of philosophy at the University of Konigsberg, and appears never to have left the city. It is said that the citizens could set their watches by the time he began his afternoon walk, and it is strange that this seemingly timid man should be the one to consolidate the philosophical advances of the previous one hundred and fifty turbulent years and set philosophy on a new course, the last time that Western philosophy was so unified that one thinker could revolutionise the entire subject with his work.

Kant's writings are notoriously obscure, and one looks in vain in his works for the cool clarity of Hume, or even Berkeley's deranged lucidity. Nevertheless, this is one of those occasions where obscurity masks insights of real depth. *The Critique of Pure Reason*, the work which launches the Kantian revolution when it is published in 1789, is difficult and profound and defies easy summary, but for you tonight ladies and gentlemen, I will try.

Kant makes a fundamental distinction between things as they appear to us and things as they are in themselves, and then, agreeing that all knowledge begins with experience, asserts, in Humean spirit, that of things as they are in themselves we can know precisely nothing. Of the great Aristotelean metaphysical categories, substance, causation, quantity, and so on, Kant asserts that they are imposed by us on our experience; indeed, it is only because reality is in a sense constructed by us that we can know anything of it. This Kant terms his ‘Copernican revolution’ – he says that instead of expecting our knowledge to conform to objects, we should expect objects to conform to our knowledge of them. If this sounds a little like mad old Bishop Berkeley, that is perhaps because it is, but the comparison so annoyed Kant that he completely recast large sections of *The Critique* for its second edition to try and make the difference more apparent. Berkeley’s idealism was merely dogmatic, Kant said, whereas his was a transcendental idealism; this meant that for Kant, only things as they appear to us are in space and time, but things as they are in themselves are not. Space and time, being the forms of our experience of the world, imposed by us on our experience, are ‘empirically real’ but ‘transcendentally ideal’.

The headline thought to grasp here is that for almost the first time in the entire history of philosophy, the world of chairs and tables and so on is thought of as, to some degree, constructed by our way of experiencing it. This constructivism is much more familiar today, and we have become quite used to the metaphor of the ‘conceptual scheme’ that we human beings impose upon the world. But this familiar way of thinking stems from Kant. What is more, it largely originates with him too – it is not found in either the Platonic or Aristotelean orientations, and the closest Greek approximation is in the work of the Stoics, although even this is not exact.

It is later thinkers who run with the idea that, allowing human thought to construct the world to some degree, different cultures may construct different worlds, but this is not a direction Kant himself finds at all appealing. He was writing at the high tide of the Enlightenment, which proclaimed, in theory if not in practice, the universal brotherhood of all human beings under reason, and for Kant, it is the framework of reason itself that dictates the categories we impose on the world. All human beings, being rational, will therefore impose the same categories.

What does this mean for our knowledge of the divine? In a sense, we can know nothing of it, since of things which are not physical objects, located in space and time and hence possible objects of our experience, we can know nothing whatsoever. But surprisingly, perhaps, Kant leaves a small gap through which we may peek at the divine. It is as moral beings that we most inhabit the noumenal world of things as they are in themselves, and we can tell that we have stepped beyond the confines of the physical world in our ability to act freely, as mere physical objects cannot do. To be sure, we are all also embodied, physical beings, chained to the world by our appetites, but as soon as raise our minds to consider the moral law, we become connected with what later writers would in a neo-Platonic spirit call ‘the absolute’. Kant seems occasionally to suggest that, even here, there is human construction going on; as he says, two things fill him with awe, “the starry heavens above and the moral law within”, and it is only because the moral law is also

governed by Kant's beloved reason that we can be assured that the moral law within us is a reliable guide to the ultimate, true nature of things.

We have travelled a long way in one hundred and fifty years from Descartes and Kant, and have finally begun to take our first tentative steps out of the shadows of Plato and Aristotle. But the journey in the following two hundred years up to the present day is just as great, if much more fractured. One philosopher will shortly proclaim the death of God, and later, others will call reason itself into question. But that story must wait until next week to be told.