

This glossary draws heavily from the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy at <http://plato.stanford.edu/contents.html> and the Encyclopedia Britannica 2002

GLOSSARY: SOME PHILOSOPHICAL BACKGROUND

NECESSARY AND SUFFICIENT CONDITIONS: A is a *necessary* condition for B iff the falsity of A entails the falsity of B. For instance, air is a necessary condition for human life, having three sides is a necessary condition for being a triangle. A is a *sufficient* condition for B iff the truth of A entails the truth of B. For instance, in order to learn about the result of a soccer game, one can either watch the game on TV, or read about it in a newspaper, or attend the game. Thus, watching the game on TV is a sufficient condition for learning the results. But it is not a necessary condition, because reading the results in the papers would also have done. A condition can be also be necessary, but not sufficient. Air is e.g. a necessary, but not a sufficient condition for human life - it also takes water, a certain temperature, etc... Similarly, having three sides is a necessary, but not a sufficient condition for being a triangle, because not every figure with three sides is a triangle. Finally, being able to drive is neither a necessary condition nor a sufficient condition for owning a car. The former holds because some car owners don't drive, i.e. one can buy a car without a drivers license. The latter is true because the knowledge of how to manipulate a car is not sufficient for owning one - one also needs the money, access to a car dealer, etc...

METAPHYSICS: The philosophical study whose object is to determine the real nature of things—to determine the meaning, structure, and principles of whatever is insofar as it is. One of the most basic issues, first addressed by ancient Greek philosophers, is the existence and nature of forms, i.e., abstract realities which are objects of the mind. The term metaphysics means 'what comes after physics', where 'physics' refers to Aristotle's book *Physica*. Thus, *metaphysics* strictly speaking refers to Aristotle's writings after *Physica*.

ONTOLOGY: The theory or study of the basic characteristics of all reality. Though the term was first coined in the 17th century, ontology is sometimes used synonymously with metaphysics. Because metaphysics came to include other studies (e.g. philosophical cosmology and psychology), ontology has become the preferred term for the study of being.

EPISTEMOLOGY: The branch of philosophy devoted to the study of the nature, sources and limits of knowledge.

SENSE-DATA: The mind-internal representation of the objects of perception. For instance, sense data theorists say that, upon viewing a tomato in normal conditions, one forms an image of the tomato in one's mind. This image is red and round. The mental image is an example of a 'sense datum'. Introduced by Bertrand Russell, C.S.Peirce and G.E.Moore in the early 20th century.

RATIONALISM: The view that knowledge can to a significant extent be acquired without the help of sense experience (contrasts in this sense with Empiricism). Usually assumes the existence of innate concepts. Knowledge can be gained from intuition and deduction from intuitions. Proponents: René Descartes (1596-1650), Benedict de Spinoza (1632-1677), Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (1646-1716).

EMPIRICISM: The view that all sense experiences are the source of all knowledge (contrasts with Rationalism). Proponents include the British Empiricists: John Locke (1632-1704), David Hume (1711-1776), Bishop George Berkeley (1685-1753)

REALISM: The conception that objects of sensory perception or of cognition in general are real in their own right and exist independently of their being known or related to mind. For instance, musical tones or colours are held to have independent existence, they are not just the product of the mind, as is held by the opposing view of Idealism. Though of modern origin, the term realism is freely applied today to certain aspects of Greek and medieval philosophy, as well as to modern tenets.

IDEALISM: a) Metaphysical Idealism, which is directly opposed to Materialism, supports the view that the basic substance of the world are ideas, and that existence is principally in the realm of these ideas. b) Epistemological Idealism, which is opposed to Realism, holds that in the knowledge process the mind can grasp only the psychic. Thus, things do not have existence outside and independently of the mind. On this view, musical tones or colours do not have independent existence, but they are generated in the mind.

PLATONISM: The view that there exist abstract, non-spatiotemporal, non-physical objects. These objects are non-mental, they are not ideas in minds. They are eternal and unchanging. Example: numbers in mathematics, or propositions. Proponents: Gottlob Frege (1848-1925); also to an extent Bertrand Russell (1872-1970), Willard van Orman Quine (1908-2001). NB: It is controversial whether contemporary platonism directly reflects Plato's own ideas.

PHYSICALISM (historically closely related to **MATERIALISM**): The thesis that everything is physical. Physicalists don't deny that the world might contain many items that at first glance don't seem physical, such as thoughts, desires, moral or social concepts. But they assume that all these seemingly non-physical phenomena are the result of physical facts. As an analogy, consider the way in which a piece of art, say a painting, is related to the canvass, its component colours and its frame, or the way in which a good meal is related to its basic chemical components. In both cases, the result - what might be called 'art' and 'good taste', respectively - is a complex aesthetic impression, which, for the physicalist, is nonetheless grounded in physical realities. The relation which enables apparently simply physical facts to construct complex impressions or concepts is called supervenience.

NOMINALISM: The medieval school of thought that denies that universal concepts such as 'father' or 'humanity' or 'red' have any reality apart from the individuals things denoted by the universal or general term. In other words, nominalism only recognizes the extension of expressions. The name derives from the contention that universals are merely words or names arbitrarily applied to similar things for convenience. Proponents: Roscelin (ca. 1050-1125) William Ockham (1285-ca.1347). In its modern usage, a theory is said to be nominalistic if it only admits singular individuals as possible referents, but no classes or groups or pluralities (W.v.O.Quine and Nelson Goodman).