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Epistemology: Plato Paper 1

What was Plato's epistemology? Epistemology is the study of knowledge, belief, justification and truth. Plato's epistemology throughout his writings were to teach the readers that if you already know about something you don't need to learn about it and don't need any more knowledge upon what you already know about that problem or situation. Also, his viewpoint is that if you don't know than you most can't or won't learn. In Plato's eyes learning was natural in everybody that we were born with the ability of learning already, however he feels that the knowledge we have must be unlocked through experiences throughout life and the universe. Plato feel as though we lose our prior knowledge when we go into the real world that we live in. His mindset is that we will rebuild our "beautiful ideas/forms again and that the knowledge will come back to us somehow in our life. He felt like learning was a "recollection of eternal truth" in everybody which means that he felt like learning was upon your memory and unlocking our knowledge to differentiate.

John Locke epistemology was completely opposite of Plato's. John Locke viewpoint was that there was no such thing of natural and inborn learning and ideas. He felt like our experiences were through sensation and reflection. Sensation meaning "the experience through the senses of the outside world" and reflection being "experience in the mind: believing doubting, connecting, inferring, comparing and contrasting." Locke thought that all humans were born with no knowledge that we have to learn as we grow and get older. He felt like children were "idiots"

and that they didn't know anything. This is not like Plato's thinking. Plato epistemology is different than Locke, because Plato feels as though people were born with innate learning and ideas. He also, feels like we aren't born with knowledge that we have to build, gain and learn our knowledge as we get older. This is completely different from Plato's standpoint, because Plato feel as though if we already know than we don't need to learn and if we don't know than we can't learn. Locke believes in the physical world around us and that matter is what is fundamental to reality, however Plato believes that we lose our prior knowledge when we go into the physical world that was having to live in.

Descartes has some of the same aspects and opinions as Plato, but most of his viewpoints are in disagreement with Plato's epistemology, but it's only because Descartes has doubted everything, because his views and beliefs were wrong when he was younger, so when he got older things has changed. Descartes only agrees with Plato's innate learning/knowledge; however he doesn't agree with Plato's justification upon his knowledge. Descartes really can't justify with knowing anything, because his mind is full of doubt. When your mind is full of doubt, you'll never know what to believe and it'll be hard for you to look at things in other people's aspects and point of view. You'll never really think something someone is telling you is true you'll always second think yourself and other people around you. Descartes epistemology is based upon the "certainty, concepts, indubitable systematic understanding, math, arguments, that are self-evident and secure" (philosophy notes). He believed that knowledge was the priority knowledge and truth apart from experience. Plato figured that knowledge was based in the "perfect form" that was here before people came on this planet and or universe. Descartes doesn't believe in Plato's epistemology of thinking, because he doubts everything including thinking that an evil demon could be tricking him when whispering in his ear. The only thing that

can help Descartes grow is the knowledge of him saying “I think before I am” this will always be his mindset, and nobody will be able to change it including Plato.

Plato used Socrates as his guide throughout his involvement with philosophy. Socrates was a peripatetic teacher who taught Plato. Right before Socrates was about to die, because he was sentenced to death for being found guilty of “impiety” (lack of piety) he talked to a group of people that came to see him before his execution and said “aiming for wisdom and rational understanding, for the release from the confining pressures of the body and its appetites; saying goodbye to the body entirely will enable the soul to become truly itself” (Western Philosophy an anthology pg.203). This helps with Plato’s epistemology, because this quote is like how Plato had the prisoners chained up in the cave and one got away but came back to tell the others about the real. I say this, because Plato felt like the body was “the prison of the soul”, because Plato believed that our souls were immortal, eternal and were separate from our bodies. Which I agree on. “Socrates draws a distinction between the changing perishable world of the senses, and the unchanging objects of knowledge and understanding; since the soul is concerned with the latter, it has a natural affinity with what is eternal and immortal” (Western Philosophy an Anthology pg.203) I picked this quote, because it goes along with what I was saying about Plato’s thinking of immortals. He never believed that the soul died once the body was dead, he just believed that they separated.

To sum up, I agree with most of Plato’s thought, but not all of his thoughts. Plato believed that our bodies die, but our souls never do. This is why he used recollection throughout his epistemology, because this is the theory that learning is about processing and growing, but also going through certain obstacles. He believed that we knew everything before coming to Earth but had forgot once we’ve landed. Socrates didn’t agree with Plato about people having an

“Immortal soul.” However, I do. Plato’s way of thinking reminds me of the bible. They’re very similar rather we want to believe it or not. I grew up Baptist which is basically the something as being a Christian. I do feel as though once we’re dead our souls are separated from our bodies. That’s how we have angels watching over us and ghost too. All ghost isn’t bad, and all ghost aren’t good, but as long as you have faith in God, you’ll be okay. By having the bible that helps us as humans know things about God. The only way through our wisdom and faith is seeking God’s help. Many people who have faith in God and read the bible based their knowledge and life around it, because they don’t want to sin. This connects with Plato’s point of view of the “perfect form” and, because of the knowledge can be in existence regardless of what the person believes. Knowledge needs to be unlocked through experience. I agree with Plato’s epistemology when he talks about how we are being with a certain amount of knowledge, however after a while our minds grow and get broader, because of the knowledge of our parents and what we’ve learned throughout school. Just like in the bible there are somethings that we aren’t sure on or contradict it’s the same way with Plato’s epistemology, because even after learning all his truths the people will still resist them.