

Reading questions 1-3 sentences

Discussion responses 1 paragraph and then 2 short responses to other students.

Plato, "Innate Knowledge" (*Meno*) – pp. 3-12

1. What does Meno accuse Socrates of at the start of the reading? How does Socrates interpret this criticism?

After its great early victories, Aristotle's logic consolidated its dominance of the philosophical world throughout the Middle Ages and into the nineteenth century. It offers an alternative logical approach while continuing to provide critical insights into current issues and concerns. He did not see logic as a separate, self-sufficient discipline that could be isolated from other aspects of disciplined inquiry. Aristotle does not believe that the purpose of logic is to prove that humans can possess knowledge. (He objected to undue skepticism.) The goal of logic is to devise a coherent system that enables us to examine, classify, and evaluate good and bad forms of reasoning. A syllogism is a type of logical argument that applies deductive argument to draw a conclusion based on the assertion that two statements or assumptions are true. Demonstration is the act of showing someone how to do something or how something works.

2. Explain the paradox/problem (the "Learner's Paradox") that Meno and Socrates talk about on the second page, concerning enquiry and learning and interpreting what we know.

Meno pointed out that it is impossible to look for something you don't know because you don't know if you found it. Socrates challenges Meno's argument by introducing epistemology as memory (recollection). Meno's paradox, or paradox of inquiry, states that "one cannot inquire into what he knows, nor inquire into what he does not know—because he cannot inquire into what he knows, because he knows, in which case there is no need to inquire into ; nor can he ask what he does not know, because he does not know what to ask." This is what Socrates said in their dialogue. This means the following: First, if you know what you are looking for, there is no need to ask, so asking is unnecessary. Second, if you don't know what you're looking for, you can't ask, so research is impossible. Third and final, research is either unnecessary or impossible based on the statements in points 1 and 2.

3. Explain Plato's theory of innate knowledge, and how Socrates's conversation with Meno's servant boy is an attempt to demonstrate its truth.

Innateism is a philosophical and epistemological doctrine that thought is innate thought, knowledge, and belief. Therefore, the spirit at birth is not a blank slate. Innateism claims that not all knowledge is acquired through experience and the senses. Plato argued that if we know certain concepts are true, but we don't learn from experience, it must be because we have an innate knowledge of them, and that knowledge must have been acquired before birth. In Plato's Meno, he recalls his mentor Socrates asking a slave boy about geometry. Although Xiao Nu has no experience in geometry, he can answer correctly. Plato thought this was possible because Socrates' questions awakened the boy's innate knowledge of mathematics. When asked about the method to get to the result, he doesn't know, but will continue to do so over time.

Aristotle, "Demonstrative Knowledge", pp. 18-21:

1. In your own words, explain the deductive aspect of Aristotle's view of how we gain knowledge. What is a syllogism? What is a demonstration?

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2. What point does Aristotle make about how deduction by itself doesn't lead to truth about the world?

For Aristotle, logic was not a science but a tool for right thinking. The object of logic is syllogism. A syllogism is nothing but an argument made up of sentences from which a conclusion is drawn (extracted). So it's not a matter of assigning truth or falsehood to a proposition (given a proposition or premises) or a conclusion, but just to observe how it is constituted. Intermediary thinking provides knowledge about things (thus seeking their causes) from other things.

3. Present in your own words the inductive process of gaining knowledge according to Aristotle, including the role of the senses, memory and generalization.

Aristotle saw induction as a form of reasoning that begins with sensory perception of details and ends with understanding that can be expressed in general statements. Aristotle believed that the objects of knowledge must be objectively true and necessary. It must be deemed necessary subjectively; the real cause must be known and the necessity of causality must be acknowledged. The most important criterion of knowledge is objective necessity. Aristotle first argued that memory is limited to past experience and is based on sensation rather than intellect. He then argues that memory associates current images with objects that were not present in past experiences. Only past sensations or objects of contemplation are true objects of memory.