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Philosophy

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Reading Question Week 1

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?

In the reading, Meno accuses Socrates of numbing or paralyzing the minds of his pupils like a stingray or torpedo fish paralyzing its victims. Socrates ignored the criticism and claimed that the mind could reach a general understanding of the truth from its own inner resources. As a result of our own general resources, we are able to guide the mind to a general understanding of truth. In Socrates' opinion, Meno was wrong.

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.

In essence, the paradox states that what you already know, you do not need to research, and what you do not know, you do not realize you are missing. Therefore, he is basically stating that learning is not important. As a result, he is saying that since we do not know, we do not need to inquire about it.

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.

According to Plato, we have knowledge that existed before birth, so anything we learn is simply a reminder of what we already knew. During the discussion, Socrates is asking a servant boy a series of mathematical questions regarding a square, and the boy keeps answering yes to all of them. To test the boy's innate knowledge, Socrates asked assertive questions that were true. In general, Socrates gave him the answers he needed. In summary, he basically tested his opinion, not his inherent knowledge.

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?

There are a lot of famous and clever philosophers who have been around throughout history, and one of them is Aristotle. Furthermore, he was a polymath as well as a philosopher. By looking at the word deductive, we are able to interpret that reasoning is based on the process of going from the general to the specific. The philosopher Aristotle believes himself to be an intelligent man. It was Aristotle's belief that one is very educated if he has the resources and habits to support that education. Experiencing and learning something before gaining knowledge is the most effective way to acquire knowledge. As a result of this deductive reasoning, he illustrates the importance of education for an individual.

Syllogism- is the form of deductive argument where the conclusion is followed by after the reading two or more points of view.

Demonstration - is in order to prove something by showing and explaining something to show a demonstration.

In general, we need to understand the importance of syllogisms, which is reasoning based on statements. It is important, however, that demonstrations need to be accompanied by an explanation that explains what is being demonstrated.

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

According to Aristotle, inference and deduction can be used to uncover truth. He is implying that a syllogism is required when searching for it. A syllogism is a logical argument where the conclusion can be inferred from at least two premises.

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

A variety of steps are involved in the inductive process of gaining knowledge, including memory, sensory and generalization. According to Aristotle, memory, for instance, can help one relate to the absence of an object from their past experiences. We see next that sensory experience reveals all of reality in a much more reliable manner than any other experience. Finally, Aristotle believed that people formed concepts and ideas and made generalizations in a childlike manner. In summary, he said that the inductive method played an integral role in the theory of knowledge and that gaining knowledge was primarily conducted through the cognitive process.