

Plato, "The Allegory of the Cave" (Republic) - pp. 69-75

1. Why do you think the Form of the "Good" is considered by Plato to be the ultimate illuminating idea that helps understand truth and reality?

I hold the conviction that Plato's conception of the "good" is deemed as the supreme idea that brings enlightenment. Plato explains that the "good" serves as the source of knowledge, although it isn't knowledge in itself. The things that are considered just attain their worth from the "good". Humans are impelled to pursue the "good", yet achieving this objective is impossible without delving into philosophical musings.

2. Recount and explain Plato's Allegory of the Cave. How does it relate to knowledge? How does it relate to levels of reality?

In a cavern, there are a number of individuals who are restrained. The only source of illumination is a flame burning at their backs and illuminating the cave wall in front of them. Meanwhile, someone else is walking by with various objects, causing their shadows to be projected onto the cave wall, reminiscent of a movie theater. This is all that these individuals have experienced thus far, only seeing shadows. But one of them manages to escape their bonds and ventures outside the cave. Out there, he observes the real world that the others are unaware of, and realizes how the shadows are cast onto the cave wall by the objects. He returns to the cave, eager to tell the others about his discovery and that they have only seen shadows of actual objects. But, the other individuals are skeptical of his claims, and despite his persistent insistence, they eventually take his life.

The allegory of the cave symbolizes Plato's ideas about the duality of existence - the world of appearances and the world of reality. Like the people in the cave, we only see appearances of things and not their true essence. The truth can only be perceived in the realm of ideas, which cast their shadows onto our world. The escaped individual represents a philosopher who has understood this truth, but, like many philosophers of his time, he is met with rejection and even death.

3. Explain in your own words the levels of reality represented by Plato's divided line.

Plato's line of division separates the existence into various realms of reality. He separates reality into two realms: the Intelligible and the Sensible. The Intelligible realm holds the fundamental concepts, quintessences, and foundations of existence. Therefore, both natural entities and human beings can be perceived as sensible replicas of their original Intelligible counterparts.

Aristotle, "Individual Substance" (Categories) – pp. 76-79

1. In your own words and referencing the reading, explain the main point Aristotle makes in describing a primary, basic, "substance" as the fundamental basis of reality.

In the proceeding text, I will elaborate on Aristotle's central declaration regarding the cornerstone of reality, which he terms as a fundamental "substance". Aristotle differentiates between two substances: the first substance pertains to a specific being (such as Socrates), whereas the second substance represents the classification or category of the individual being (for instance, the species of human). On the other hand, Descartes acknowledges only two substances - a substance of thought and a substance of extension. Given that human beings consist of both, they can be regarded as a third substance in some aspects.

2. What does Aristotle mean when he says that a substance cannot be "said of" or "said in" a subject? Look up the concept of a "predicate" online. How might you rephrase Aristotle's point by saying a substance can never be a predicate?

Aristotle posits that a widely spread substance cannot be viewed as a substance. This is because the defining characteristic of a substance is its unique qualities, which are not shared by any other entity. However, a universal substance is inclusive and can be applied to numerous entities.

Aristotle asserts that in such instances, the predicate does not properly apply to the subject. This is because the subject inherently possesses its own characteristics and identity, but the predicate is dependent on external circumstances that make it the subject.

3. Why do you think Aristotle picks out primary substance as the basic building block of reality, and not the parts, or atoms, or matter, or any other smaller thing that might make up a substance?

Aristotle regarded the primary substance as the cornerstone of reality rather than smaller components, such as parts, atoms, matter, or other elements that make up a substance. This is due to his belief in the reality of forms. He believed that forms exist in the natural world around us, and that objects have defining forms that give them their distinct identities.

In nature, everything possesses specific forms that set them apart from others. Aristotle acknowledged that individual objects not only have distinctive forms, but also consist of particular matter. To him, matter was not limited to atoms or small particles, but also included a universal substrate of unformed potentiality. However, this universal substrate cannot exist on its own and is dependent on its combination with form to be a specific type of matter.

In conclusion, all natural things consist of a combination of matter and form, referred to as hylomorphism. Hylomorphism is a philosophical doctrine that states that physical substances are made up of matter and form and are a unity of the two. Therefore, at all levels of analysis, the basic elements remain, which Aristotle referred to as elements. These elements are also composed of matter and form. It is the forms that make objects intelligible and answer the question of what they are.

Aristotle, “Four Types of Explanation” (Physics) – pp. 413-415

1. List and explain in your own words the four main reasons (sometimes called "causes") for why a substance is what it is according to Aristotle.

1.Cause of form:

The factor that shapes is the form, the blueprint, or the concept of something and its defining characteristic. The statue is carved from stone and is referred to as such because its form is what constitutes its identity as a statue.

2.Material cause :

The substance factor, also known as the material factor, refers to the substance or material, i.e. the raw material, from which something is comprised or arises along with the other three factors. In the statue's case, the substance factor is the rock.

3.Cause of action:

The action factor, also referred to as the movement factor, is the driving force, the impulse that initiates change. The sculptor is the driving force behind our statue. In modern usage, only the effect factor is considered a true cause, while the others express a mode of existence rather than a cause-and-effect relationship.

4.Purpose cause:

The purpose factor, also known as the target factor, is the intention, aim, and purpose behind something happening. If the statue was carved to depict or honor a war hero at a later date, then this would be its purpose factor.

The concept of the purpose factor is difficult for us to understand today because in our understanding, only living beings are capable of having intentions and purposes. Everything else simply occurs. However, for the ancient Greeks, the world was seen as teleologically intertwined, meaning everything in it had a purpose and goal.

2. Take the example of a table. How would you explain why a table is what it is, in terms of the four main types of explanation according to Aristotle.

The inquiry would be "What is the composition of the table in question?" which pertains to the substance factor of the table. The response to this inquiry in the case of a wooden table would be: the lumber. This can significantly influence the quality and traits of the table.

Another aspect that affects the shape of the table is its shape and design, which is known as the formative factor. The formative factor is accountable for the thing's appearance and identity. The table is identified as such due to its form.

Now we come to the fourth and final factor that affects the table's form. This fourth factor is of the utmost significance and is referred to as the end factor because it relates to the ultimate purpose or reason for the thing. The question that arises here is: what is the intended use of the table? I would answer this question with: for communal dining or seating.

3. What does Aristotle say about the fourth cause of things, and how it even exists in nature? How does nature show this cause? Do you agree or disagree that there is a true purposefulness in nature? Why?

Aristotle speaks of a cause present in all things in existence and explains it as the reason for which something exists. Plato believed the source of an entity's structure and function stems from the entity itself. However, Aristotle believed the source lies in its sustenance. Aristotle claimed that everything in the natural world embodies either a principle of motion or rest. I concur with the notion that there is a genuine sense of purpose within nature.