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Reading Question Week 3

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?

Plato saw the Good as the highest form of reality and the ultimate object of knowledge, and that grasping its nature was the key to understanding truth and reality. According to him, the Good provides the light that illuminates the other Forms, making it possible for us to understand them and to see their connections to each other.

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

The allegory of the cave relates to knowledge in that it shows how knowledge of the world of Forms is the only true knowledge and that knowledge of the physical world is limited and unreliable. It also relates to levels of reality by showing that there are different levels of reality, with the physical world being the least real and the world of Forms being the most real.

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

Plato's divided line represents the different levels of reality that exist, from the changing and unreliable world of the physical senses to the perfect and unchanging world of Forms and the Good. The line serves as a way to understand the hierarchy of reality and the path to knowledge and wisdom.

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.

Aristotle's main point in describing a primary, basic "substance" as the fundamental basis of reality is that he saw substances as the ultimate building blocks of the world. He believed that substances have a unique combination of matter and form that gives them their identity and that everything else in the world is

dependent on substances. This view of reality as being composed of substances has had a lasting impact on Western philosophy and has influenced later thinkers in various ways.

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's point that a substance cannot be "said of" or "said in" a subject means that substances cannot be reduced to or defined by their attributes and that substances cannot be used as predicates to describe or define other entities. Substances are unique and independent entities that exist in their own right.

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 chose primary substance as the basic building block of reality because he saw substances as individual, independent entities that exist in their own right and are the ultimate basis of reality. He believed that substances are the most real and worthy of study because everything else depends on them and exists in some way because of them.

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.

Aristotle believed that these four causes explain why a substance is what it is. The material cause refers to the matter that makes up an entity, the formal cause refers to the form or identity of an entity, and the efficient cause refers to the agent that brought the entity into existence. The final cause refers to the purpose or end goal of an entity. These four causes work together to explain the reality of a substance and why it is what it is.

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.

1. **Material cause:** The material cause of a table is the wood, metal, or other physical substance that makes up its body. This cause refers to the matter or physical substance that makes up an entity.

2. Formal cause: The formal cause of a table is its specific shape and structure, which gives it its properties and distinguishes it from other objects. The form of a table is what makes it a table and distinguishes it from other objects.
3. Efficient cause: The efficient cause of a table is the carpenter, designer, or manufacturer who brought the table into existence. This cause refers to the agent or causes that brought the substance into existence.
4. Final cause: The final cause of a table is its purpose or the reason why it exists. The final cause of a table is to provide a surface on which people place things. This cause refers to the purpose or end goal of a substance, or the reason why it exists.

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 believed that the fourth cause of things, the final cause, is the purpose or end goal of a substance, or the reason why it exists. He believed that this cause exists in nature and is reflected in objects' and creatures' natural tendencies and behaviors.