

Reading Questions week 3

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

1. Plato believed that the Form of the "Good" is the ultimate illuminating idea that helps understand truth and reality because he was a proponent of the theory of Forms, which states that there are ideal, unchanging Forms or concepts, such as the Form of Justice, the Form of Beauty, and so on, that exist beyond the physical world and that can only be apprehended by the intellect. According to Plato, the Form of the Good is the highest Form, the source of all other Forms, and the ultimate object of knowledge. The Form of the Good is what gives things in the physical world their value, and it is what allows the human mind to comprehend the truth about reality. By contemplating the Form of the Good, one can gain a deeper understanding of reality and truth.

2. Plato's Allegory of the Cave is a story that he used to explain his theory of Forms and the nature of reality. The allegory is as follows:

Some people have been imprisoned in a cave from birth and are facing a blank wall. Behind them, there is a fire, and people who are carrying objects, such as sculptures and other things, pass between the fire and the wall. The prisoners can see only the shadows of the objects that are cast on the wall and believe that these shadows are the only reality.

One day, one of the prisoners is freed and forced to leave the cave. As he adjusts to the bright light outside, he realizes that the shadows he saw in the cave were not the only reality and that there is a whole world outside of the cave. Eventually, he comes to understand that the objects themselves are more real than the shadows and that the sun, which he now sees, is the source of light and the source of all truth.

3. The divided line is a way of dividing these two realms of reality, and it is divided into four sections:

- a) The lower section represents the world of appearances and sense experience, and it is associated with beliefs and opinions.
- b) The next section represents mathematical objects, such as numbers and geometric shapes, which are seen as more certain and real than beliefs and opinions, but still limited in their understanding of reality.
- c) The third section represents the world of forms, which are seen as the objects of true knowledge and understanding.
- d) The highest section represents the knowledge of the forms themselves, and it is seen as the highest level of understanding and reality.

In this way, the divided line represents Plato's belief that there are different levels of reality and that the highest level of reality and understanding can only be reached through reason and philosophical inquiry rather than through the limitations of the physical world and our senses.

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

1. Aristotle argues that there is a basic building block of reality, which he refers to as "substance." He believes that these substances are the fundamental units of reality, and everything else is based upon them. He further defines substance as that which exists in and of itself and is not dependent on anything else for its existence. Aristotle explains that a substance is the primary and most basic component of reality, and everything else is either a property or a characteristic of a substance.
2. When Aristotle says that a substance cannot be "said of" or "said in" a subject, he means that a substance cannot be predicated on another substance. A predicate is a word or phrase that modifies or describes a subject, and in this context, Aristotle is saying that a substance cannot be described by another substance. To put it simply, a substance cannot be a property of another substance. One way to rephrase Aristotle's point is to say that a substance can never be a

substance because it exists as a self-sufficient entity and cannot be defined in terms of anything else.

Because Aristotle believes that substances are independent entities on which everything else is dependent, he chooses primary substances as the fundamental building blocks of reality. He believed that substances are the only things that can exist in and of themselves, and everything else, such as properties, quantities, and relations, depend on substances for their existence. He saw substances as having a special kind of existence, which he referred to as "ousia" or "being."

Aristotle believed that substances could not be reduced to smaller parts, atoms, or matter because he saw these things as being dependent on the substance for their existence. He believed that these parts and properties are what give a substance its particular character and identity, but they do not define the substance itself. Instead, the substance is the basic building block that gives these parts and properties their meaning and significance.

In this sense, Aristotle's view of substances as the basic building blocks of reality is a metaphysical one, as it is concerned with the fundamental nature of existence. He saw substances as the ultimate reality and everything else as being dependent on 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 identifies four main reasons, or "causes," for why a substance is what it is. These causes are:

- a. The material cause, refers to the raw materials that make up a substance, such as the wood used to make a table.
- b. The "formal cause," which refers to the design or blueprint that gives a substance its particular form and structure, such as the design of a table.
- c. The efficient cause, refers to the actual process or event that brings a substance into being, such as the carpenter who builds the table.

d. The final cause refers to the purpose or end goal that a substance serves, such as the function of a table to provide a surface for objects.

2.

a. The material cause of a table is the wood used to make it.

b. The formal cause of a table is the design or blueprint that gives it its particular form and structure, such as the legs, top, and support structure.

c. The efficient cause of a table is the carpenter who builds it, using the raw materials and design to create the final product.

d. The final cause of a table is its purpose or end goal, which is to provide a surface for objects.

3. Aristotle believed that the fourth cause, the final cause, was the most fundamental. He believed that everything in nature had a purpose or end goal and that this purpose was what gave things their meaning and significance. He saw the final cause as the explanation for why things were what they were, and that everything in nature was part of a larger, interconnected system that had a purposeful order.

Aristotle believed that nature showed the fourth cause through the regularity and pattern of events that occurred in the world. For example, he believed that the cycle of the seasons was a demonstration of the purposefulness of nature, as it occurred regularly and predictably, serving the purpose of providing the right conditions for growth and sustenance.

Whether or not one agrees that there is a true purposefulness in nature is a matter of personal belief and philosophical perspective. Some people may see the natural world as being purposeful, while others may see it as being governed by purely physical and deterministic laws.