

Jamie Willix

Professor

Philosophy

18 February 2023

Question 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 considers the Form of the Good to be the ultimate source of knowledge, truth, and reality because he sees it as the highest principle that is responsible for the existence and coherence of all other principles. He believes that it provides a standard by which all other principles can be judged by and is therefore the key to discovering many mysteries of the universe. He says how science and truth may be deemed to be like the good, but not the good as the good has a place of honor yet higher. He believes that the good far exceeds the essence in dignity and power too, for the good is a universal standard that allows us to distinguish between what is real and what is merely appearance.

2. Recount and explain Plato's Allegory of the Cave. How does it relate to knowledge? How does it relate to levels of reality? Plato's allegory of the cave is a metaphorical story that explains the difference between the world of appearances and the world of reality. In the allegory, prisoners are chained in a dark cave, facing a wall where they can only see shadows cast by objects behind them. The prisoners mistake these shadows for reality, and have no real knowledge of the world outside the cave. When one prisoner is freed and sees the world beyond the cave, he realizes that truth and is able to return to the other prisoners and share the truth. The

allegory explains the difference of mere opinion, which is based on limited perceptions, and true knowledge. As the prisoners were only aware of a limited illusion of reality, while the freed prisoner came to understand a more true reality. The allegory suggests that only through philosophical inquiry and contemplation of all the Forms can one achieve true knowledge and a deeper understanding of reality.

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

Plato's Divided Line is a visual representation of his theory of knowledge and reality. It outlines the different levels of understanding that human beings can achieve. It is divided into two parts, with a horizontal line and a diagonal line intersecting it, which forms four sections. The two bottom ones represent the world of appearances, while the two top ones represent the world of Forms. The bottom left section represents shadows, which are the lowest level of reality, also known as the physical objects that we perceive through senses. The top left represents beliefs, which are based on opinions about the physical world. The bottom right represents mathematical knowledge, which is abstract and logical. The top right section represents intelligible Forms, which is the highest level of reality and the ultimate source of knowledge. For, these forms are eternal, unchanging, and are not based on sensory perception. The Divided Line suggests that true knowledge and understanding come from contemplation of the intelligible forms, rather than relying on merely sensory perception or opinions.

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

believed that a primary, basic substance is the fundamental basis of reality. By substance he means the underlying essence of things that makes them what they are. He explained that everything in the physical world is made up of substances that can all be broken down into their constituent parts. He then points out that there must be something that can't be broken down any further, hence the primary substance. By understanding the nature of primary substances, Aristotle believed that we could gain a deeper understanding of nature and reality itself.

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? When Aristotle says that a substance cannot be said of or said in a subject, he is referring to his belief that substances are primary and independent entities that can't be attributed to anything else. He means that a substance can't be considered as a property or characteristic of something else. To rephrase his point by saying that a substance can never be a predicate, I can say that a substance is not a quality or attribute that can be attributed to a subject. Rather, a substance is the fundamental entity that exists independently of anything else and is what other characteristics are attributed to. Therefore, substances can't be predicted of other things or said in a subject, instead they are the subjects to which other things are predicted.

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? I think he picks out primary substance as the basic building block because it is considered to be the most fundamental and independent entity that exists. For, it is the ultimate subject that underlies all other things in the world. I think he didn't choose other parts, atoms, or

matter that makes up a substance because he believed that they are not substances in their own right, but rather are the constituents of substances, which while they are necessary for the existence of a substance, they are not sufficient to explain what a substance really is. Therefore, primary substances are the ultimate foundation of reality and everything else is built upon it.

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. There are four main reasons according to Aristotle for why a substance is what is. The first one is the Material cause, which refers to the matter that makes up the substance. The second one is the Formal cause, which refers to what the substance looks like or how it is organized. The third one is the Efficient cause, which refers to what causes the substance to exist. The fourth one is the Final cause, which refers to what the substance is for or what its role is. Each of these reasons give an explanation to why a substance has its unique identity and characteristics.

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.

With respect to a table, the material cause might be wood, plastic, or any other material from which the table was made of. The formal cause could be the design that specifies the dimensions, shape, and structure of the table. The efficient cause might be the factory worker who used tools and labor to make the table. The final cause may be to provide a surface on which people can work, eat, or organize objects on. According to Aristotle, these four causes explain why a table is what it is.

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 says that the “final cause” is the purpose for which something exists for. Aristotle believed that this cause is an essential aspect of nature, and that it can be observed in the way that natural things behave and develop. For instance, the final cause of an apple seed is to grow an apple tree, and this goal is realized through the seed’s natural development over time. The final cause is viewed as a crucial aspect of understanding natural phenomena as it provides understanding into the underlying purpose and direction of the natural world. I agree with Aristotle that there is a true purposefulness in nature, as everything, like the wings on a Blue Jay allowing it the ability to fly was created with intention and purpose. I think it allows God’s divine work to shine because by paying attention to every purpose that everything has, it proves divine intervention.