

Jada Hamilton

Professor Sanchez

PHI101

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Reading Questions- Plato & Aristotle

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?

The form of good is all things good participating together in a form. It is also the virtue of all things that are good, so all things that are true participate in the form of good. All things true and of beauty are separate from the form of good.

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 Plato's Allegory of the Cave is about prisoners who have been chained in a cave for all their life. They repeatedly wonder and question about the world on the outside. They see shadows and realize that the world out there is more real than the one in the cave. Plato suggests to one prisoner that he should try to escape. They're completely unaware of the reality that is outside and when one prisoner leaves he returns blind. This relates to knowledge because you can't have it without various experiences. The prisoners didn't experience the world, sun, burgers, or human interaction. So without being aware of anything in the world, one prisoner sadly had to pay the consequences. They chose to believe their reality that was visible and not try the reality that was intelligible.

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

The level of reality is between what is visible and intelligible. With this line it shows the sense of mind that people are in and whether it is reliable or not. The visible is based on our senses and how we experience things through sight, smell, touch, and hearing. The intelligible reality is based on our ability to reason and our intellect.

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.

Substance is the category of being that every category is based on. It is the underlying reality and the foundation of all existing things. The difference between potential and actuality is what substance is. It is the natural being and material reality. "So if the primary substances did not exist it would be impossible for any of the other things to exist." (Cottingham, 2008)

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?

What is said of a subject is both the name and its definition are necessarily predicated of the subject. On the other hand, things that are in a subject the definition and name isn't predicated. It isn't possible for the definition to be predicated, but the name can be. A substance can't be predicated because without it other things wouldn't exist. Other things are

predicated because they're all in or of them. Substances are the foundation for all the other things and without it there would be nothing to predicate.

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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?

A substance is when its existence is dependent on systematic knowledge and everything else depends on it. It is the basic building block of reality because it is the material reality and things that are natural.

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.

The material cause is when someone explains something based on its parts and what it's made out of. A formal cause is the description of something based on how it is formed and its properties that it is made of. An efficient cause is the explanation of something's movement and what caused it to change. The final cause is explaining the sake of something and how it's done.

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.

A table is what it is because it is made out of wood, marble, or metal. A table is what it is because it has four legs and a heavy top. A table is a very sturdy and heavy object that only moves if people pick it up. A table is to be eaten on for family dinners or other activities.

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 is commonly known for making a mistake because he claimed that a tree in nature has all four causes. I do not believe that there is no purpose in nature. It holds such power and resources for our world. Without it we wouldn't survive. "Nature is a cause, a cause that operates for a purpose." (Cottingham, 2008)

Cottingham, J. (2008). *Western philosophy: An anthology*. Blackburn Publishing.