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2/14/23

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 believed that the Form of the Good is the ultimate illuminating idea because it is the source of all other Forms or Ideas. According to Plato, everything in the physical world is a mere shadow or imperfect copy of its corresponding Form or Idea in the world of Forms. These Forms or Ideas are eternal, unchanging, and perfect, and they are the true reality that lies beyond the physical world.

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 illustrates his philosophical views on knowledge, reality, and the human condition. The allegory depicts a group of prisoners who have spent their entire lives chained in a cave, facing a wall. The only thing they can see are shadows cast on the wall by objects passing in front of a fire behind them.

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

A divided line represents the levels of reality that Plato believed in, from the lowest level of the physical world to the highest level of the world of Forms or Ideas. Each level builds upon the one before it, and the ultimate goal is to attain knowledge of the highest level of reality.

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 substances were the fundamental basis of reality. According to him, substances are the primary objects of knowledge and the most basic entities in the world. He defined substance as something that exists independently, and that can be identified as a distinct, particular thing.

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?

We could say that a substance cannot be a predicate because it is a fundamental entity that exists independently of other things. Substances cannot be reduced to properties or attributes of something else, and they cannot be fully understood by describing or modifying something else. Instead, substances must be understood on their own terms as independent entities with their own unique existence and nature.

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's emphasis on primary substance as the basic building block of reality reflects his belief that individual things are the most fundamental level of existence, and that everything else can be explained in terms of these individual things.

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. **Material cause:** This refers to the matter or material out of which a substance is made. For example, the material cause of a chair could be wood or metal.

2. **Formal cause:** This refers to the form or shape that a substance takes. It is the specific arrangement of the material cause that gives a substance its distinctive form. For example, the formal cause of a chair would be its specific shape or design.

3. **Efficient cause:** This refers to the force or agent that brings a substance into existence or causes it to change. For example, the efficient cause of a chair could be the carpenter who builds it.

4. **Final cause:** This refers to the purpose or goal for which a substance exists. It is the reason why a substance is made or exists in the first place. For example, the final cause of a chair could be to provide a place for someone to sit.

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 of the material it is made of, the form it takes, the agent that created it, and the purpose it serves. All four of these causes work together to create the table as we know it, and they provide a comprehensive explanation for its existence and function.

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?

I disagree with Aristotle and argue that there is no inherent purpose or direction in nature. They may believe that the natural world is simply the result of random processes and that the appearance of purpose or direction is simply an illusion.