

a) Explain Plato's theory of the soul

Plato was the pupil of Socrates and therefore, some of Socrates theories are presented in the theories of Plato. He conveyed a lot of his theories and ideas in dialogue form.

Plato isn't a materialist; he thinks there is another substance in the world or the universe other than matter. He calls this the soul or 'psyche'. Plato thinks that souls are what make bodies move and animate them. One main characteristic of the soul is that it has 'free will'. Unlike matter, the soul can't be separated or cut into bits, either it exists or it doesn't. Plato also believes that the soul is immortal. If the soul can't be 'cut up' or lost then this must mean that it remains the same at all times. Plato sees the soul and matter as opposites. Which means that every characteristic the soul has, the body doesn't have it.

To understand Plato's theory, people must remember that he believed that everything existed in a hierarchy. At the bottom was the 'World of the Senses', which are placed at the bottom because of their unreliability. The hierarchy increases to the 'World of forms', known as thoughts or reasons. This once again increases and rises to the highest of all the forms, the 'Form of the Good'. Everything that belongs to the 'material world' is made of a material that time can erode; everything is made after a timeless mould that is eternal.

Plato's has three main ideas on the body and the soul. Dualism is the theory that the body and mind exist separately from each other but are linked in some way. The second is materialism, which is the theory that our minds are inseparable from our bodies. And the third Idealism is the theory that our bodies are unreal, and illusion and that our minds are the only true reality.

According to Plato, people have no real freedom if their lives are concentrated on physical requirements. A person's soul can free itself and direct their life in both physical and intellectual ways. Only after bodily existence can the soul rise to the 'World of Ideas'. Plato held the idea that the soul was pre-existent before birth and carried on after the person it inhabited, died.

The time the soul spends in the 'Realm of the True Knowledge' enables it to gain true knowledge of everything. However, when the soul is born into the natural world, it forgets that knowledge. In this world, the soul has no experience of perfection, and, therefore, cannot remember the forms. But, when the soul is confronted with something resembling the forms, it recollects what it once knew. We call this learning, but Plato believed it is actually recollection of past experiences in the 'Realm of True Knowledge'. For example, when we see two different cats, we say that they are both cats. Yet, there is nothing in the natural world that shows us that the animals are definitely cats. Therefore, we must have had knowledge of cats before we entered this world. When we see the two different cats, it triggers the recollection of seeing different cats in the 'Realm of True Knowledge'. Plato argues that our soul, before it entered this world, had knowledge of the form of equality when it was a part of the invisible realm. On entering this world, this knowledge was forgotten and now has to be recollected. Therefore all the knowledge of the forms, such as equality, justice, goodness, etc. is recollected from a past knowledge we had.

Plato believed that the mind and the body were often in opposition. The mind wishes to gain understanding of concepts and idea and to gain true knowledge of the forms. The body is interested in sense pleasures. The body also has needs, which need to be met, such as food, rest, water, and warmth. These needs can become an interruption; can disrupt the work of the mind. Often needs can

completely send our minds off course. Instead of focusing on the job in hand, our mind can wander with thoughts of food, sleep etc. In conclusion, Plato was a dualist and believed that a soul survived death and that the soul did in fact pre-exist before going into a human body.

b) 'Plato's dualism is consistent with his concern for the body in the Republic'. Discuss.

Plato considers that there are two sorts of substance in the world. This is said to be matter and soul. Therefore, Plato is a dualist. He thinks that there are two substances and they can't share characteristics, so they must be in opposition. A soul cannot be distinguishable by using the characteristics of matter, such as, orange, square or old. In a similar way, matter can't decide to go in a new direction or pass through other material objects.

A key argument of Plato involves Socrates. Socrates argues that the soul isn't simply an 'effect' of a physical body, but instead is a cause of the body's movement. Socrates responds to criticisms that say that the soul maybe has different properties to matter. Which basically implies that the soul is an effect of the physical human body. Without the body, the soul would die.

Plato's theory is more about how we reason about things rather than things to do with the soul. Plato believed that the mind had three elements; reason, appetite and desire. One of these parts always tends to dominate a man. The soul attempts to combine the elements of the mind in complete harmony. Therefore, needing rationality in order to tame appetites. For example, reason would be very little use if a person weren't willing to go on a diet, or stop drinking. Plato says that the soul takes care of the whole of a person. Plato saw the body as a nuisance. The real person is the mind behind the physical properties of that person.

An analogy Plato uses to signify his point is of a charioteer, representing reason, which has two horses, representing spirits and appetites, which are driving the chariot, representing the body. The more reason used, the higher the charioteer can travel to the 'World of Forms'. The more the horses go on their way, the more the soul is drawn to the earth, representing the bodily needs of a person.

According to Plato, man is a dual creature. We have an immortal and therefore, unreliable soul. He also believed that the soul existed before it inhabited the body and that when a soul wakes in a human body, it forgets all perfect ideas learnt in 'World of ideas'.

In the 'Phaedo', Plato has Socrates describe the "freeing" of the soul "from the chains of the body". This shows that, in addition to believing the body and soul are distinct from each other, he believes that the soul is the superior half of the pair, and that the body is an obstacle to be overcome.

Plato makes a very clear distinction between the body and the soul. The fact that he believes in the mortality of the soul indicates that he believes the two are different. He believes the body is mortal, so the soul must be a separable object from the body.

Plato's dualism isn't consistent with his concern for the body portrayed in 'The Republic'. Plato talks about how the body is divided into two; the body and the soul. Plato believes that the soul is the important part and that the body is useless. However in the Republic he does talk a lot about the body, but doesn't say that it is completely irrelevant, therefore he does show a slight inconsistency.