

Socrates's theory of forms



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Theory of Forms

Introduction

Knowledge about the world is developed by basing on the things we see, listen and perceive and the information about these things is dependent on the senses and our perception about them. The knowledge and the perception, about even the most common things in the world are dependent on the general concept that exists about them. The descriptions of the things are defined by their appearance. Impression and the effects they have, but, for all these some standards are defined and these standards are used to categorize the things. Socrates also made this the center of his study and in his theory about the forms, he states that the things are explained on the basis of the concepts and those concepts are abstract in nature. This paper will be about the theory of forms presented by Socrates and the allegories that he used to explain them in detail. The paper will include the summary of the theory of forms followed by the third man objection to the argument, next comes the supposed counter argument by Socrates of all things in the world are set of ne large poll of forms, followed by the response to the counter argument all forms being the subject of another large set or being mutually exclusive, succeeded by the fact that inexistence of infinity and finally the conclusion to the whole discussion.

Socrates Theory of Forms

In the famous theory of forms or idea Socrates explains that the things achieve the properties like beauty or virtue with the help of other properties like having the property of being good and being beautiful and the existence

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of these properties make things what they are. It is our perception and our mind that decides what is beautiful and not our senses (Plato Republic pp. 579-582). Similarly there can be several types of the virtues and the states, in which they exist, but, there will be one common attribute to it that is virtue. We are not able to see these things, like beauty, like the way we can see the other objects (Plato Republic 507b).

Since these properties beauty and virtue cannot be seen with the eyes and they can be perceived through different means and exist in separate domain and this can be considered as forms. Since our senses can be falsified and they can have different perception and can perceive wrong things then only philosophy can give the actual solution to this problem. In terms of forms, Socrates explained that there are a varieties of objects and things in the world that are related to the same concept and if those objects are liable to that particular concept then it is the certain feature that that particular concept should be common in these objects. Based on these assumptions, these things should have that particular attribute in common and if they are related to that attribute, and then it is the part of the existence of the things. It is certain that if some objects share same attribute, then a part of that attribute may be common in them, but, it cannot exist completely in a single object. Based on the facts we can say that if a group of objects have some attribute in common it is because of the fact that they all are liable to it, but, it cannot exist completely in one objects and this comes to the result that the particular attribute that is shared must be the abstract in nature and can't be accessed by senses. (Baird pp. 279-282)

The main feature that exists in these attributes or properties is that that they are intelligible, clear and explainable (Pluto Republic 509d ff). Another feature that these properties or forms have is that they have is that they are unchangeable and exist in the same form (Pluto Republic 484b ff). The form may vary in the objects they exist but it will remain in its original form, in its actual existence (Pluto Republic 484b ff).

Forms were further explained in Parmenides and was explained and were that every object has one or the other type of the form and the form has one and only one property that itself and cannot be mixed and also do not have any other property i. e. it is pure in its existence like beauty will have no other feature than beauty in itself. Moreover, every form is unique and has oneness in it i. e. there can be no copies of the form and it is the only one that exists and defines the objects that are associated with it and the forms are self defined and self predicted (Pluto Parmenides 128e- 130a). We cannot qualify or interpret a form on the basis of contrary predicate and the beauties itself can only e defined by being beautiful in its existence and nothing else. Form is self predicted and cannot rely on any other form and nothing can exist within it (Pluto Republic 479a-c, 523). Forms are abstract in nature and on the basis of the property they have, they give that particular feature to the things in which they exist. A thing may be beautiful at one point, but, with the passage of time, the beauty may be compromised and may not exist in the form in which, it was actually and this may change the shape off object in which form originally existed. But, the existence of form cannot be challenged and it will remain in its original state, without any

change or degradation and the actual form will not be influenced and cannot be defined by other forms.

Parmenides' Third Man Objection

An objection that was raised against the Socrates' theory of forms, in particular to his claim that all the objects that are answerable to one form have that form in it and that form also has that attribute in it and is self-predicted. Parmenides claimed that if F is the form then if the three objects have same feature in common or have F-ness in them then it is the terms on which we all explain and determine these objects is the form F. property of largeness was used in this case and Parmenides claimed that if the form F also has F-ness in it then there should be another form or other level of the form say F* that can explain this Form F. in this case F will not be self-predictable and will be dependent on other form F*. in the similar manner F* will have F-ness and it cannot be defined by itself and will further depend on F**(Plato Parmenides 132 a-b). For example if a Form is large then it should have the property of largeness in it, but, cannot be explained by the form large itself and there should be the other form say large2 that will explain this property and later large2 will be dependent on large 3 and so on and it will lead to infinity.

Socrates' Response

When it is said that F has an F-ness in it, it means that the property that makes a form F, F is the F-ness. It cannot be said that it is derived from some another version of the form. If we say that someone is honest, it means that we have actually defined what a honest person actually and when we make a <https://assignbuster.com/socratess-theory-of-forms/>

square or show that it has the property of being square it means that we will give the representation of that form in a manner that it will fulfill all the attributes associated with it. When the form honesty is defined, the points are associated with it that determines what actually being honest means. When it is said that form honest has the property of honesty in it, it means that this form represents what honesty actually means. If we define three groups a, b and z and we tell that the things in group have honesty in them which actually belongs to a large group of forms F. the larger group F will have all types of forms but the distinct ones and these will be the ones that will help in identifying the members of group a. it means that group F is a predefined and limited group, that helps in defining other groups. It means that group F is the group of standards and is the ones that decides that which things fall into which category. This means that since forms are abstracts, so, they are also are the standards on the basis of which the things are explained and defined.

Objection to Socrates' Response

It means that the set X that is the set of all the forms are the standards that are helping in categorizing and defining other objects. When a standard itself is defined then there will be some other features that will have these features. But, if we defined property F1 and make it a standard then, it means that we associate set of features to it and these features decided what actually will be the standard or form F1 should be. If for defining the standard of the form we say that let us have a form F1, F1 is combination of x, y, z and when x, y and z combine together then they can define what actually F1 is. It means that my original objection related to self prediction

remains true. The form F1 will lose the property of being unique and distinct in its form. Let us take honesty. Honesty is the property that has truthfulness, reliability and sincerity in it. These collectively define Honesty. This shows that honesty itself is dependent on the other three forms of truthfulness, reliability and sincerity. It means that we will have to later define what these three features are and this process will go on and will become infinite. It means that we will have much large set than F, that will be defining the forms that are member of F. it is also possible that the attributes that define a form are also the member of the set F and they are interlinked to each other and are dependent on each other for their existence.

Argument against Parmenides' Objection

If a form F1 is dependable on F2, F3 and F4 for its existence, it means that it is not the standard itself. The entire larger concept that define the world are the ones that are self defined and are independent of the other facts and forms. If we say that set F is the subset of a much larger set X and X is itself the subset of another set Y, but this all process will end at one point or the other. When we say that something is unique, it means that it is one in its form. When we say that god is one, it means that he is the only one who can achieve such greatness and no one can be compared to it and will have the property of being the God in him. For a God we define who can be the God and who can be the one that can rule over all humanity. It means that we have defined him as the symbol or standards. But, there are properties of greatness and oneness that are defining him, which means that God's existence is not infinite, but it order to tell about the extent of his influence

properties of greatness and oneness are needed, which means that in order to even define the greatest one in the world, we need the properties even smaller and much lesser than it. Therefore, it holds true that all the forms are mutually exclusively and are dependent on other forms; we can say that nothing is infinite, but, it is true that forms themselves need to be defined, with the help of other forms.

Conclusion

We can conclude from all these discussions that the forms are not purely self predicted, although the form is a symbol for its property and distinct feature, but, it is true that in order to define a standard or form, we also need the help from the other forms, which may be much larger or much lesser in greatness or strength. Although the standards tell us about their specific feature, but, they are the part of the much larger pool and are also dependent on the other forms of its own group.

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