

Philosophy

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Philosophy 1. How are Plato's and Descartes' views of the soul/self similar?

Both Plato and Descartes believe that the soul/self is best (or only) to think and learn separate from the body and its faculties. According to Plato, “ the soul reasons best without bodily senses. ” Plato claims that sight, hearing, pain, and pleasure are a distraction to the soul in its search for reality, and that true knowledge can only be achieved with pure thought alone. “ The body confuses the soul and prevents it from acquiring truth and wisdom whenever it is associated with it. ” Descartes very similarly believes that the body and its faculties, namely imagination and again the senses, are “ distinguished from the self as modes from a thing. ” According to Descartes, the essence of the self consists entirely on being a thinking thing. The body can perceive pain and pleasure, but nothing beyond that, it is up to the intellect to “ conduct its own inquiry into things external to us. ” Thus, much like Plato, Descartes claims that it is this thinking essence, and not the body, and thought alone, and not perception, that is the key to true knowledge. 2.

How are Hume's and Nietzsche's views of the self similar, and how are they different? Both Hume and Nietzsche believe that the self is a summation of one's actions and perceptions. According to Hume, the self is “ a collection of perceptions in perpetual flux and movement. ” There is no simplicity or identity in the self, but only an infinite system of perceptions in an infinite “ variety of postures and situations. ” These perceptions are then linked by the relations of cause and effect, which mutually influence, modify, alter, create, and destroy each other. Nietzsche similarly believes that the self is merely a relation of human desires to each other. According to Nietzsche, desires and pleasures or human drives are the “ commander. ” This human drive controls everything else, and the strongest drive is a tyrant, even “ reason and

conscience bow down. " Both philosophers ultimately agree that there is no pure forms or simplicity of the self, but that it is rather driven by actions and perceptions, as well as desires and pleasures. Hume's main idea of the self is that there is no self that is stable over time, rather the self is merely a series of transient feelings, sensations, and impressions of oneself at any given moment. That is, there is no unified self that ties all perceptions together. Nietzsche's main idea of the self is different as it reaches a little into the very motivation for the self and life. Nietzsche argues that the self is composed of drives, but unlike Hume, goes further to say that these drives almost vie with each other to be " the ultimate purpose of existence and the master of all other drives. " Nietzsche calls this the will to power and illustrates the point accordingly: " ever living body within which individuals treat each other as equals does to another body what the individuals within refrain from doing to each other. " The will to power is to grow, spread, seize, and become predominant; it not only drives the self but also the reality of the universe. 3.

How is Plato's view of the world's creation similar to the ordinary religious view, and how is it different? Similar to the " ordinary religious view" of the creation of the world, Plato believes that the universe was created by a maker or a god, who not only made the world to be as excellent and supreme as nature would allow it, but who also endowed it with soul and intelligence. Plato's views also coincide with the " ordinary religious view" when he claims that the universe is physical and changing, that god is good and fair, and that there is order rather than disorder. Plato however differs from the " ordinary religious view" of the creation of the world when he claims that there is a second type of universe other than the physical: eternal universe, that never changes. According to Plato, god uses this

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eternal model of the universe and the forms (of beauty, good, etc.) as a template to create the existing world. “ The universe resembles an ideal living thing of which all other ideal living things are a part of... the ideal living thing comprehends in itself all other intelligible ideal living things. ”