

# Plato and the dual world essay

[Philosophy](#)



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

Not many thinkers in the history of the western civilization have been more cited than Plato. For the most part of the middle ages, the majority of lines of thought were developed around his philosophical arguments. Either to defend him or to contradict him, the new ideas could not get rid of his influence. Christianity was almost uniquely influenced by the works of Plato until at least the thirteenth century .

One of the most important parts of Plato's works is his theory of Ideas. This was an attempt to make a distinction between two things that were his main concerns for a great part of his life: a definite division between reality and appearance. Plato was interested in giving an account of reality as it is, sorting out all imperfect appearances, which constitute what a commoner would consider " real" . He would argue that the knowledge heralded by sophists of his time, was a false knowledge, a reflection of what majorities " know", or the knowledge of appearances . He contrasted this apparent knowledge with what a true philosopher knows. He insisted then that the real knowledge was in the understanding of the Forms or Ideas, or what he called the " visions of truth" . These Ideas were not unlike molds from where the things perceived by the senses are shaped. Plato believed that there were then two separate worlds: one of pure and eternal forms that can only be grasped by the intellect; and the other is the world perceived by the senses, where things are just imperfect reflections of their ideal forms. The first is a pure logical world that existed for itself and had equal validity to the world of the senses. But then, as Plato develops his theory, this speculative world gains greater truth than its counterpart .

Establishing this difference and hierarchy of relevance, Plato then proceeds to assert that a person who learns about the sensuous world, can only form

<https://assignbuster.com/plato-and-the-dual-world-essay/>

an opinion, while a true philosopher, one that seeks to unveil and grasp the intelligible world, would be the only one able to gain true knowledge . So a seeker of true knowledge would not want to know about beautiful things, because those belong to the world of the senses and would only help form mere opinions. Instead, a true philosopher would want to know about beauty itself, which is what gives the name to all beautiful things found in the sensuous world. .

The Athenian insists on the importance of finding these Forms because they would be what define other things, or constitute definitions that contain all things that share the characteristics of the defined . These definitions would enhance the capabilities of human understanding of the perceived world as well. One example of this is made when he defined the soul.

Plato defines the soul as something that existed and will always exist in the speculative world of Ideas independently of the physical body, which is its prison. The soul, having been part of the higher world of forms, is the only part that can recognize and apprehend them.

He goes on to say that, when someone dies, the perceptive organs would give evidence that the soul dies with it, but it is only apparent, thus false. The soul is eternal and continues to exist independently, and only through definitions can one avoid being misled by the senses .

This way of separating the visible world from the inherently invisible intellect, gave way to many lines of thought concerning the nature of the soul and the essence of things, some of them making a separation between body and mind such as behaviorism, and others denying this dualism such as materialism . But interestingly enough, beyond the purely speculative nature of this discussion, there are psychological and physiological implications.

<https://assignbuster.com/plato-and-the-dual-world-essay/>

Nowadays, there might not be a search for a higher form of reality, but there are questions about what makes human a human being. Scientist and inventor Ray Kurzweil poses the question of how much of the body can be replaced before a human stops being human, and reveals how close technology is to replicate mental processes . That would definitively prove that mind and body are two totally different things, or at least pose totally new questions.

In any case, though Plato´s ambition to separate the visible and perceivable world from a higher realm made only by abstract ideas did bring about interesting reflections about the nature of knowledge, it overlooked the fact that most knowledge obtained in the modern world comes from experience. It is through the sensible organs and careful empirical observation that the human race has advanced to where it stands today. It is now known that ideas might give way to questions, but it is the experience the one that provides answers.

## **Works Cited**

Ferrater, José. Diccionario de Filosofía. 3rd. Barcelona: Ariel, 2004.

Hegel, Georg. " The Philosophy of Plato." The Journal of Speculative Philosophy (1870): 320-3-80.

Kraut, Richard. " Plato." 21 September 2013. The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy. 15 April 2014. .

Kurzweil, Ray. The Singularity is Near. New York: Viking, 2005.

Robinson, Howard. " Dualism." 21 December 2012. The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy. 16 April 2014. .

Russell, Bertrand. A History of Western Philosophy. New York: Stratford Press, 1946.