1. What are the consequences of Parmenides’ negation? What was Plato’s answer to it?

Parmenides states two modes of inquiry, (a) the one that ‘is’ and it is not possible that ‘is not’, and (b) the one that ‘is not’ and is necessary that it ‘is not’. He believes the first mode, the goddess’ path of reason, to be correct. (You cannot think, or speak, of that which ‘is not’). Therefore Parmenides’ Being is existent, and whatever that is the negation of this Being necessarily cannot exist. This has several implications. Firstly, change and motion cannot exist, for it is impossible that something can come into Being, since it must have not been in Being. Second, what about lying? Plato’s answer to this was to combine Parmenides’ Being and Heraclitus’ becoming. Plato does not consider not-being as the negation of Being, but rather a different idea in the realm of Forms alongside Being. Change and motion can exist as instances merely participate in Being.

1. What is substance? How does it relate to Being?

Substances, from the Greek ‘ousia’ through the Latin ‘substantia’, refer to the underlying, fundamental entities of reality. For the pre-Socratics, substance was thought of as the elements, and later on, as atoms. For Aristotle, and Plato, substance was form. Aristotle thought that form manifested itself at the peak of every instance. For example, a young man like me, at 22, has yet to peak in the form of ‘man-ness’, and I am continuously in motion towards that peak, after which I will decline in ‘man-ness’, till I am in the tomb at 85. For Aristotle, substance is form, and form is Being, existing as constant, unchanging Ideas, constructed by the mind. Plato lays the groundwork for this relationship, in that Being is an Idea, or Form, existing in the ‘true’ realm of Ideas. It is a fixed Actuality, where each instance is in motion towards or away from. As such, Being is seen as an intelligible form, a Form that can be made sensible by the intellect.

1. What was Descartes’ contribution to philosophy? What revolution was he a part of?

For Descartes, Being is the subject. Unlike previous notions of Being in some perfect, unchanging world of Forms, Being decides what is and what is true. Being has not only become the centre of knowledge but also the meter of clear and distinct ideas, which Descartes defines as truth.

1. What is Dasein?

Dasein is not a concept, but rather a phenomenon. Dasein is the entity which ‘each of us is himself, and which includes inquiring as one of the possibilities of its Being’. The word Dasein is broken down as follows – ‘Da’ is the ‘there’ of time, the unfolding of the past, present and future, and also the openness to Being, while ‘sein’ is Being itself. Each Dasein, being necessarily born, is ‘thrown’ into a world, a net of meanings. These meanings arise from a language understanding of reality, for there is no notion of ‘I’ before ‘I’ am referred to by some other entity.

1. Why is Anxiety important?