



Chapter Two – Reality and Being Is What You See What You Get?

Roots of Wisdom
6th edition
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Chapter Review



The Issues Defined

- Does something “real” underlie the world of appearances?
- What is the difference between everyday reality and virtual reality?
- Do things happen at random in the cosmos, or is there order and purpose?
- Is it possible to speak about external reality in a definitive way?

Reality and the Brain

- Certain ways of apprehending what seems to be real, such as a single simultaneous field of space, may be learned behaviors
- Reality is constructed by us, raising questions about what is really “out there”

Ontology

- Plato's idealism

- Plato's ontology is directly tied to his epistemology (theory of knowledge) and axiology (theory of values).
- proposed a domain of perfect Forms, separate from the imperfect copies of those same Forms in the material world.
- argued that the Forms are more real than the material world in which they imperfectly manifest
- Argued that we can recognize the imperfect imitations of the perfect Forms that exist in this world because we had a glimpse of the other world -- the world of Forms -- before our birth.

Ontology

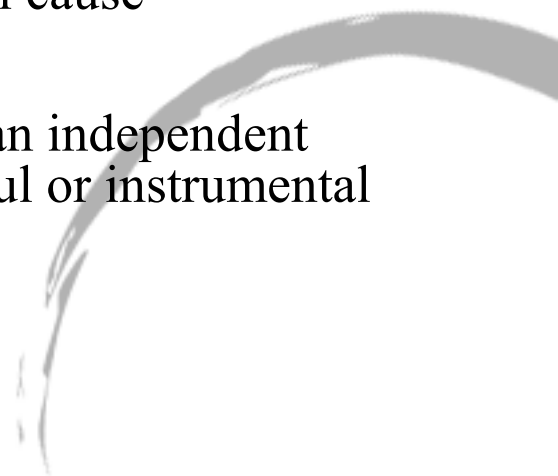
- Aristotle
 - As a student of Plato, he accepted the basic division of the world into Form and matter
 - Argued, however, that there are no Forms apart from matter – and no matter apart from Forms
 - Stipulated that there are four kinds of cause: material, formal, efficient and final

Ontology

- Buddhism
 - *samsara* entails limitless cycling through reincarnations, until enlightenment or true seeing is achieved
 - things are empty of inherent being, arise together co-dependently, and are mutually interdependent



Ontology

- Taoism
 - Everything comes from, is supported by, and returns to the Tao, which manifests as yin and yang in dynamic complementarity in nature
 - Materialism
 - Reality is essentially matter or material
 - The world is like a clock: matter obeying laws of motion; there is no need to attribute intelligence, purpose, or final cause
 - Pragmatism
 - Scientific accounts do not necessarily represent an independent reality; they are valuable insofar as they are useful or instrumental in making predictions.
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Contemporary Physics and the Nature of Reality

- Quantum mechanics (i.e, physics at the sub-atomic level) appears to undermine classical Western metaphysics and Newtonian mechanics [physics]; we can speak only in terms of probabilities, and the act of observing alters reality
- Relativity suggests that time and space are two aspects of the same thing
- String theory attempts to resolve the apparent conflict between quantum mechanics and the vision of a curving space-time presented in general relativity

Cosmology

- Is there order and purpose in the Universe?
- Greek
 - Some Greek philosophers argued that order and purpose exist. They believe that the universe has a teleological in nature.
- Plato countered Sophist relativism by arguing, via the Forms, that the cosmos had both a definite order and a moral character
- Aristotle made a similar counter to the Sophists, not in terms of an objective moral order, but in terms of the four causes, which included a sense of telos, or purpose

Cosmology

- Quantum Theory and Astronomy
 - Advances in physics raise the question of whether there is a discernable overarching cosmic order or not.

Eternal Dimensions

- Hypatia's neoplatonism -- “nous” or cosmic “mind” is the ground of a world soul, out of which emerges both the universe and sentient beings.
- Indigenous Peoples of Mesoamerica and North America tend to see unity, rather than duality; some see everything – matter and spirit – as holy; Nahua conceptions understand this world as a continually transforming configuration of teotl, or sacred energy
- Traditional African worldviews often share this sense of a sacred cosmos – inhabited by humans and a divine being

Eternal Dimensions

- According to the Seneca account of origins, a variety of other beings preceded human habitation of this world; some Maya accounts conceive this world as sung into being by another world
- some Akan accounts from Ghana in Africa portray creation as having been an activity in keeping with the very nature of the Creation deity
- African American Christian worship often fuses the African idea of a sacred cosmos with the role of God as liberator of the oppressed

Key Terms

- Virtual Reality
- Forms
- Idealism
- Entelechy
- Samsara
- Bodhisattva
- Skandhas
- Net of Indra
- Tao
- Yin/yang
- Ch'i
- Materialism
- Pragmatism
- Quantum mechanics
- Uncertainty principle
- String Theory
- Teleology
- Relativism
- Neoplatonism
- Nous
- Teotl