Core 1: Weekly Response Week #

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Due in hard copy and/or on turnitin.com the first discussion section class following lecture.

Name: Majok Ring Date:1/28/15

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Lecturer: Wil van Breugel (Astronomy)

Lecture Title: “Masks of the Universe: Cosmologies Since the Beginning of Time”

Lecture’s Central Argument: As time passes, our views on the workings of the universe are continuously altered based upon our new learnings of this world. We can apply what we have learned from our worldly perspective and follow the trend of moving toward more physics/scientific based observations rather than continue to have a metaphysical outlook.

Lecture’s Supporting Evidence/Examples: Van Breugal described metaphysics as a non-empirical character into the nature of existence and compared it to physics which relies on scientific method and careful observation. Van Breugal also defined different eras such as the Age of Magic 100,000 years ago, and the Age of Myth 10,000 years ago, and the age of science which is the present. Using these dates, he proves that we are moving towards a more physics based understanding of the universe and seek more knowledgeable approaches to solving new questions. Comparing the universe to masks, as we need to uncover the mask to find the truth, Van Breugal heavily utilizes Plato’s “Theory of Forms’ (“Masks”).

Three questions you have with respect to this lecture:

* What caused our views of the universe to change from Magic to Myth, and to finally Science?
* Is there still a need to metaphysics if our knowledge of the universe is based upon physics?
* Is there a limit to what we can learn about the universe due to our single earthly perspective?

Other Core 1 subjects to which the lecture might be related: “Can We Know The Universe” -Carl Sagan

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Narrative Response (½ single-spaced page): Examine some aspects of the lecture in relation to the weeks’ readings and to other course subjects (lectures or readings) of interest to you. (Generic prompt)

Within this week’s lecture “Masks of the Universe: Cosmologies Since the Beginning of Time” by Wil Van Breugal, our focus remains primarily on the aspect that our views of the universe are not perpetual. As our cultural/ educational influences change with time, our views of the universe also change. Van Breugal utilized the different time scales in order to prove that point as 100,000 years ago society relied upon magic to explain the universe and even 10,000 years ago it relied upon myth to also explain. Using relevant scholars such as Plato, Van Breugal compares our knowledge of the universe to a series of masks. As one mask is pried off, another mask remains underneath, making sure that we will never have a full understanding of the universe. This relates to last week’s lecture reading of Carl Sagan’s “Can We Know the Universe” as no matter how many masks are removed, another remains and we can never fully understand the universe. Although that may be true, we still prepare ourselves and attempt to understand it by changing our views and better utilizing our resources to explore. Here, we have seen the development of understanding as the aboriginals believed that we would receive revelations from our dreams and put heavy emphasis on this type of understanding as it was the simplest explanation they had at the time, given their resources. Within the mythic understanding of the universe, we see once again society utilizing its resources to explain the universe as Kings claim to be able to communicate with the Gods and grant them divinity and knowledge, making their word the absolute truth as you cannot doubt the workings of God. And finally within the scientific universe, we rely on dense mathematical calculations to understand basic principles such as gravity or even the age of the universe, which we ourselves calculated within discussion by using a series of logical steps. As we continue to gain more and more resources and ways to observe the universe without bias, we will transition to a more science based learning style and will seek to further refine our methods of discovery.