

Notes on “Plato”

- I. Plato started his own school, The Academy, named for the Greek hero Academus
 - A. This is why his writings have been preserved
 - B. Plato’s school lasted for hundreds of years after his death
- II. Plato’s “philosophical project” was to find a reality that is eternal and immutable
 - A. That which is eternal and immutable is not material, but rather “forms” or “ideas”
 - B. Plato asked why Democritus’s atoms always were reincarnated into the same shapes
 - C. To Plato, true reality resided in the “world of ideas”
 - D. Our word *idea* comes from the Greek word *idein* meaning “to see”
- III. Plato divided the world into two realms, the world of the senses and the world of ideas
 - A. The world of the senses is always in flux and one can have approximate perceptions of it but no absolute knowledge
 - B. The world of ideas cannot be perceived by the senses, but we can have true knowledge of it through our faculty of reason
 - C. Leads to the perception of a division between the immortal soul and the imperfect body
 - D. Material reality is but the shadow of the eternal forms in the world of ideas
- IV. In support of Plato’s theories, Bertrand Russell says, “We cannot express ourselves in a language composed wholly of proper names, but must have also general words such as ‘man,’ ‘dog,’ ‘cat’; or, if not these, then relational words such as “similar,” “before,” and so on. Such words are not meaningless noises, and it is difficult to see how they can have meaning if the world consists entirely of particular things, such as are designated by proper names.”