

Knowledge and the Forms

Arguments for the Forms from the nature of knowledge (476e-480a):

First argument:

- 1) If I know something then I cannot be mistaken about it. (E.g., If I know that water boils at 100C, then I cannot be mistaken about it.)
- 2) If I know something, then there must be things that I cannot be mistaken about, i.e., they are the sorts of things that once aware of we are infallible about?
- 3) One can always be mistaken about sensible things.
- 4) If knowledge is possible, then there must be non-sensible objects about which we are infallible.

Compare:

- a) Necessarily, [if S knows that p, then p is true].
- b) If S knows that p, then necessarily, [p is true].

Compare:

- c) Necessarily, [If S knows that p, then S is not mistaken about p.]
- d) If S knows that p, then necessarily, [S is not mistaken about p].

(d) suggests that if one knows p, then p is the sort of thing that one cannot ever be wrong about (p is certain?). But is this plausible? I know that water boils at 100C, but it is the sort of thing that one can be wrong about; it is even the sort of thing that I can be wrong about and have been wrong about in the past. It looks like there has there been a slide from (a) to (b), or (c) to (d).

Second argument:

- 1) If I know something, then I am reliable in making judgements about it. (E.g., if I know what piety is, I am reliable in making judgements about what's pious.)
- 2) My reliability is based on the fact that what I know is stable--what one appeals to in making the particular judgements is always the same. (Keep in mind that Plato and Socrates would think that what one appeals to is the correct account or definition.) If I make a mistake in my judgements (e.g., about what is pious), then I must have in mind something other than the true source of knowledge.
- 3) The objects of knowledge are stable, the objects of belief/opinion are unstable. To have knowledge of X is to have access to a perfect model of X that is in no way not-X (otherwise it would not be a reliable guide).
- 4) Sensible things are unstable and are capable of being both X and not-X.
- 5) If knowledge is possible there must be non-sensible things that serve as stable models for our judgements.