

Jan 19th, 2006

P340: Homework Assignment No. 1

DUE DATE: Monday, Feb. 3rd. 2006

Please note that late assignments will not be marked

(1) The idea that the universe and the world around us was to be understood ultimately in terms of mathematical concepts has turned out to be central to modern physics, beginning with the work of Newton. Using the course notes and other sources (such as the web), give a concise account of roughly 700 words, of how such a view developed with the ancient Greeks, and how far they took it. Explain not just the historical development, but also the key ideas. You should also say in what way you think these ideas are fruitful and correct, and also what you think are the weaknesses of these ideas - giving arguments to support your views.

(2) Write an essay, of roughly 800 words, which expresses your views on the existence of a 'supra-sensible' world, populated by timeless and indestructible entities or "Forms", like mathematical objects. This world is to be distinguished from the perceived world of which we are directly aware. You can briefly discuss the opinions of at least some of the ancient Greeks, but by far the most important part of the essay should give your own analysis of the question. Feel free to be as creative in your use of examples and situations, and by all means develop your own ideas and opinions.