

Final Exam Study Questions

Ancient Philosophy

Summer 2015, First six weeks

1. How did the earliest philosophical explanations of nature differ from earlier, pre-philosophical explanations (as found in Hesiod, for example)? Describe at least two significant differences in the content or structure of such explanations.
2. What two 'ways of inquiry' does Parmenides distinguish? Which is the only way we can follow, and why can't we follow the other?
3. What are Parmenides' criteria of Being? Give an example of one of these criteria, and explain briefly how Parmenides argues for it.
4. Why did Parmenides' arguments against coming-to-be present a problem for philosophical explanations of natural phenomena, and how did pre-Socratic philosophers after Parmenides attempt to respond to this problem?
5. What is a 'What is F?' question? Explain what this type of question asks for, and the criteria for acceptable answers.
6. Suppose we find a tall tree, and a philosopher then tells us: "The tree is tall because the sun warmed its wood and sap. When things are warmed, they expand, so the tree grew whenever the sun shone, and became tall." Why would Plato think this explanation is inadequate? How does Plato instead think we should explain the fact that the tree is tall?
7. How does Plato define philosophers at the end of *Republic V*? Explain how philosophers differ from 'spectators' (or 'lovers of sights and sounds').
8. In the analogy of the line at the end of *Republic VI*, what do the different parts of the line represent? How are the objects in each part related, and how can we move from one part of the line to the part above it?
9. Explain Plato's analogy of the cave in *Republic VII*. What do the different realms in the analogy, and the different things within them, represent?
10. Why does Plato think that philosophers are the people who are best suited to rule? How might he respond to the objection that philosophers would be poor rulers because they spend all their time thinking about abstract things that are of no practical importance?
11. Explain the problem that Meno raises for Socrates' search for a definition of virtue. Why does Meno think such a search is impossible? How is the doctrine of recollection supposed to solve this problem?
12. In what sense is a physical couch the cause of a painting of a couch, for Plato? Explain how this case sheds light on the idea that the 'true couch' is the cause of physical couches.
13. Give an example of how opposite qualities can be perceived in the same thing at the same time. What role does Plato think such examples play in acquiring knowledge?

14. Why does Plato think that an imitator is a “maker of the product which is two removes from nature”?
15. According to Aristotle, when are two things related ‘homonymously’? Give an example of two things he would say are related homonymously.
16. What are the two basic relations that give rise to Aristotle’s initial, four-way classification of beings in the *Categories*? List the four classes of beings in this classification, and say which of these four classes he identifies with primary substances. Give an example of a primary substance and explain why it belongs to this class.
17. What is a ‘category’, for Aristotle? Give an example of a category *other than* substance, and give an example of something in that category.
18. What does it mean to say that a primary substance is a ‘hylomorphic compound’? What are the components in such a compound, and how are they related to the distinction between potentiality and actuality?
19. What three principles are involved in every case of change, on Aristotle’s analysis? Show how this analysis applies to a case of ordinary change, and a case of the generation or destruction of a primary substance.
20. What are the four types of causes operative in nature, according to Aristotle? Give an example illustrating each type of cause.
21. How does Aristotle argue that there are final causes in nature? What alternative view does his argument reject?
22. Explain why a river is a natural thing, but a statue is *not* a natural thing, according to Aristotle’s definition of nature.
23. What is Socrates’ method? Describe its purpose, procedure, and typical outcome. What criticisms of this method does Thrasymachus voice in *Republic I*?
24. When Socrates asks Euthyphro for a definition of piety, Euthyphro proposes that piety is “to prosecute the wrongdoer”. And when Socrates asks Meno for a definition of virtue, Meno answers that “if you want the virtue of a man, it is easy to say that a man’s virtue consists of being able to manage public affairs and in so doing benefit his friends and harm his enemies. . . .” Why doesn’t Socrates accept these answers?
25. In the *Apology*, Socrates says to the Athenians: “if you kill the sort of man I say I am, you will not harm me more than yourselves.” Explain why he thinks this follows from the ethical theses we called ‘Socratic intellectualism’.
26. Why is the question of whether virtue is teachable important for Socrates? Say how this question is related to Socrates’ idea that the particular cardinal virtues are ‘unified’, i.e., the same thing or same kind of thing.
27. Describe how Protagoras responds to Socrates’ worry that virtue is not teachable. By what mechanism does he think we teach virtue? How does the analogy of the flute-players help us see that this is so?
28. Briefly explain the general theory of motivation that Socrates argues for in the *Protagoras*. How does this theory describe the mistake made by akratic people—people who choose to do one thing, despite knowing that some other action would be better?
29. What distinction does Glaucon make between types, or classes, of goods in *Republic II*? In which class does Socrates say justice belongs, and in which class do most other people think it belongs? Briefly explain one reason that Glaucon gives against Socrates’ way of classifying justice.

30. What agreement does Socrates think he has made with Athens, according to what he says to Crito? What is the content of this agreement, and what evidence does he offer that it is in place? Why does he think the existence of this agreement implies that it would be unjust for him to escape from prison?
31. What are the different parts, or elements, of the soul, according to Plato? How does he distinguish them, and how are they related to the classes in the ideal city? Give Plato's definition for the virtues of wisdom, courage, or self-discipline, and say where they reside in an ideal soul or city.
32. What is Plato's definition of justice, as it occurs in the soul? Explain what each of the parts of a person's soul does when she is just, and give an example of what her soul might be like if she were unjust.
33. Why does Plato think that his argument which distinguishes three parts of the soul *confirms* his account of the cardinal virtues as they appear in the city?
34. What is the soul of a tyrannical person like, according to Plato? Which part rules, and why does this mean that he is unhappy? In your answer, be sure to classify the type of desires that motivate a tyrannical person.
35. What are the capacities which are sufficient for life, according to Aristotle? How do we know that these capacities are distinct?
36. Explain why Aristotle thinks that, when a living person dies, she ceases to be a person, "except homonymously". Why does this feature of his view imply that there is no 'soul-body' problem?
37. What is a 'function'? How are functions related to virtues, for Plato and Aristotle, and why is this relationship important for inquiry into how to lead a good life? What difference does a virtue make to performing a function?
38. In what sense does Aristotle think that happiness is the 'best' or 'highest' human good? Explain how happiness differs from goods like health or money, according to Aristotle.
39. What are the two types of virtue that Aristotle distinguishes in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, and which parts of the soul are they associated with? What role does each type of virtue play in producing good actions?
40. Aristotle defines virtue of character as "(a) a state that decides, (b) consisting in a mean, (c) the mean relative to us, (d) which is defined by reference to reason, (e) i.e., to the reason by reference to which the intelligent person would define it". Explain each part of this definition using the example of courage.