

Minnesota State University, Mankato

Philosophy 334: History of Philosophy: Ancient Philosophy Fall 05

### Final Questions

Answer no more than 5 of the following questions. The directions are basically the same as for the mid-term papers. Happy writing and happy holidays to all.

1. In Book I of the Republic, several different accounts of justice are put forth. Each is reduced to absurdity by Socrates, or so it's alleged. Lay out and assess one or more of these arguments from Book I, defending your assessment where needed.
2. What do you take to be the challenge of Glaucon and Adeimantus in Book II of the Republic and how successful is Socrates in meeting this challenge?
3. Plato's "first principle" is the "one person/one natural task" principle (or principle of specialization). In your own words, say what the principle is, what role(s) it plays in Plato's account of justice both in the city and the individual, and any strengths or weaknesses you find in the principle proper or any uses to which it is put. As always, defend your claims.
4. Before considering the "luxurious" (or feverish) city, Socrates gives an account of a much simpler city. Lay out the nature of this city and then say whether and why it is, or is not, preferable to the kallipolis Socrates eventually offers us in the Republic.
5. In Book III of the Republic, Socrates lays out a long account of music and poetry and theatre, all with an eye to curbing their presence and influence on members of his community. Examine this portion of the Republic and say where you think Socrates' remarks are sensible and defensible and where they are not.
6. Does art necessarily appeal to the irrational or appetite part of our soul and if so does this justify limiting its presence or controlling its content, as Plato suggests in Books II and III?
7. Critically analyze Plato's ideas concerning the kind of medicine and law that will be required in his community and the idea that education in the arts and physical training are really for the soul rather than the soul and body.
8. Is Socrates/Plato's aristocracy/meritocracy the best state imaginable and should we take it as our political ideal? Defend your answer by judicious appeal to the Republic, including the discussion of the myth of the metals and the restrictions Plato puts on the lives of the Guardians.

9. Articulate as clearly as you can any mistakes you think are made in Plato's argument that all and only Forms are knowable while all and only sensible objects are opined. Defend your articulate claims.
10. Appealing to the Republic, provide a coherent sketch of Plato's conception of knowledge. What is it, how do we get it and what use is it to us? (You might consider comparing and contrasting Plato's conception with those of other ancient philosophers, including Heraclitus and Parmenides).
11. Give an account of the argument Socrates uses to distinguish the philosopher from the lover of opinion, criticizing it or protecting it from possible criticism along the way. (HINT: Here you might find it useful to consider to what extent Parmenides and Heraclitus have been either leaned on, perverted or undermined).
12. In Book IV, Socrates contends that justice in the individual is a matter of having and preserving an ordered soul. This raises questions about the relation between the ordered soul account of justice (i.e., Platonically just people) and the common account of justice as "following the rules" (i.e., vulgar justice). Most importantly, if there is no connection between the two, it seems that even if Socrates is successful in showing that Platonically just people are happier than those with corrupt souls, this will not show that people who are vulgarly just are going to be happy. Thus, the challenge of Glaucon and Adeimantus will not have been met. Provide your thoughts on this matter, defending your claims as you go.
13. Is Plato's system of eugenics for "the best"? Defend your answer by appeal to Socrates' arguments in Book V.
14. Elaborate, elucidate and evaluate Socrates' claim that men's nature is in general superior to women's nature, defending your claims along the way.
15. Choose a major topic of your choice on Plato's Republic and explain as fully and clearly as you can what is right or wrong about Plato's treatment of it. Some possible topics include: education; human nature; knowledge; the social status of women; communal society; the significance of the arts; the import of dialectic; the nature of justice, etc. (NOTE: Do not choose a topic that will result in your repeating your other essay).
16. Provide a critical analysis of Socrates' analogy between the Good and the Sun and his discussion of the divided line in Bk. VI.
17. Are there bad pleasures, as Socrates claims? If so, what are they and why are they bad pleasures? If not, why not. Whatever your answer, tie it to the issue of whether pleasure is or could be THE GOOD, for human beings. Discuss enlighteningly.

18. Provide a critical analysis of Socrates' parable of the cave in BK. VII of the Republic.
19. Critically analyze the purpose and justification of the course of studies, including dialectic, in Bk. VII?
20. Critically analyze any or all of Socrates' 3 "proofs" that just people are happier than unjust people in Book IX.
21. Does Socrates ignore the possibility of a restrained or prudential use of the Ring of Gyges? If so, does this threaten the adequacy of his answer to the challenge of Glaucon and Adeimantus? Defend.
22. "The doctrine that the Form of the Good is the cause of the knowability and being of all the (other) Forms is an intelligible and at least plausible doctrine assuming the truth of the theory of Forms at any rate." Argue as forcefully as you can for or against the claim in quotation marks.
23. Who is the truly wise person, the poet or Plato's philosopher (or someone other than these two)? Discuss enlighteningly.
24. Discuss the pros and cons of the status of women in Plato's Republic vis-a-vis the article by C.D.C. Reeve, "Women". (If you are interested in doing this one, see me about getting a copy of the Reeve piece).
25. What, according to Aristotle, is the chief practical good and how can we most reliably secure it? Do you agree with Aristotle? Why or why not?
26. Are we, as Aristotle suggests, moral blank slates such that we are at the mercy of our instruction with respect to our moral virtues? Discuss and defend.
27. Critically analyze Aristotle's view of moral states as being means between two extremes, the excess and the deficiency.
28. Do you agree with Aristotle that ethics simply doesn't allow of the rigor and precision of, e.g., mathematics or natural science? If so, what are the implications of this for ethics or morality generally?
29. Basically, Aristotle says that doing a virtuous action, e.g., a courageous action, requires us to do a courageous action as a courageous person would do it. Ditto for all of the moral virtues. Discuss the pros and cons of this account, defending your claims along the way.
30. Some have suggested that Aristotle's doctrine of the mean rules out heroic action as being virtuous rational activity. Does it and if it does, is this a serious flaw in his ethics? Defend.

