

Questions to Prepare for the Oral Final—Final Draft

1. In *Whale Rider* we talked about how Pai renewed the social imaginary of her tribe. Can you relate that to Nietzsche's ideas about Dionysos and Apollo?
2. What makes *Whale Rider*, *The Matrix*, and the three first Shakespeare plays we watched comedies? Argue for or against the idea that *King Lear* is a comedy. Is *Good Will Hunting* a comedy? What about *Love's Labor's Lost*?
3. What role does the Divine Feminine play in the Shakespeare plays we watched?
4. Discuss what factors contributed to the increasing secularization of North Atlantic societies starting especially around 1500, but with reference to earlier events.
5. What is a social imaginary? Can you talk about it in relationship to *The Matrix* and *The Tempest*? What kind of relationship did Prospero and Neo have to the social imaginaries of the island and *The Matrix* respectively. Similarities and differences?
6. What's the difference between a buffered and porous self? What factors contributed to the emergence of the buffered self in Europe during the modern era?
7. What are the essential characteristics that distinguish modern societies from premodern societies? Do you think we're still living in a modern society, or has it morphed into something else?
8. What do I mean by the phrase 'under the line'? Can you give me some examples from films we watched where 'under-the-line' plays a role? What are some symbols that appear in literature and in the movies we've seen that suggest places that are under the line?
9. Do you see any connection between what I call under the line and our discussion of right and left brain function as elaborated by Iain McGilchrist in the RSA video we watched in class?
10. What does Charles Taylor mean by 'the view from Dover Beach'? Why does he think that leads to a critique of the ethic of authenticity that's just wrong?
11. What was the Axial Age? What effect did it have on the societies that experienced it? Are we still living in a post-Axial era in a way that makes any real sense?
12. What does the *Romance of the Rose*, Dante, and Shakespeare have in common? Can you describe how each contributed to it?
13. What themes for modern thought can you trace that originate with Kant and go through German Idealism to contemporary postmodern thinking?

14. How does Shakespeare's concerns about distinguishing between appearance and reality play out in similar ways in *Love's Labor Lost* and *The Tempest*? In what way does Shakespeare foreshadow existentialist themes in *Love's Labor Lost* and in *King Lear*? Bring in the concept of *anagnorisis* to your answer.
15. Do you see a connection between the situation of Will in *Good Will Hunting* and that of the four boys at the end of *Love Labor's Lost*? Can you bring Kierkegaard into your answer?
16. What does Isaiah Berlin think is the central characteristic of Romanticism? How do you see Romantic themes still playing a role in shaping the contemporary social imaginary?
17. What do the terms 'immanent' and 'transcendent' mean? How do these ideas relate to our discussion of enchantment and disenchantment?
18. Discuss *Good Will Hunting* in the light of Charles Taylor's first three lectures about "The Malaise of Modernity". Bring in a discussion of Kierkegaard and relate it to related themes we discussed about *Fargo*.
19. Can you explain the 'realist' position on essences as developed by the Florentine Neoplatonists and why this had such an inspiring effect on the late 15th Century artists?
20. Why has the marriage between Athens and Jerusalem been such a fraught relationship? When was it in harmony? What caused it to break down?
21. Why does a society's moral imaginary depend on its cosmic imaginary? Bring in a discussion of the role of nominalism vs. realism and the importance of the Great Chain of Being.
22. How does the Romantic idea of Geist or Spirit shape how artists think about what they are trying to accomplish in their work? Compare this to how the idea of the Neoplatonic idea of Divine essence played a parallel role for the Renaissance artists. How were they different; how the same?
23. Discuss differences and similarities of the characters Marge from *Fargo* and the Dude from *The Big Lebowski*.
24. Discuss what impact the Protestant Reformation had on the secularization of Western societies.
25. Can you relate it to our discussion of the Renaissance Neoplatonist humanist ideal, to the idea of the authentic Self in Kierkegaard, and then to the idea of the uebermensch in Nietzsche? Bring in Heidegger, Sartre, and the postmodern thinkers' idea of the death of the subject.