

PHIL 320: HISTORY OF ANCIENT PHILOSOPHY

STUDY QUESTIONS FOR FINAL EXAM

Plato

1. Socrates often asks questions of the form “What is X?”. What kind of answer is he looking for? What are some kinds of (seemingly plausible) answers that he rejects? Why does he reject them? What, in general, are the requirements for “Socratic definition”?
2. What is a Socratic definition? In what ways do Socrates’ interlocutors go wrong (according to Socrates) in trying to provide such definitions? What are the requirements for a correct definition? Give examples to illustrate your points.
3. A recent critic bemoans what he calls “the Socratic fallacy,” namely, the doctrine that one cannot recognize instances to which some general term applies unless one knows, and can give, the definition of that term. What reasons might one give for supposing that this is a Socratic doctrine? Is it?
4. A recent critic bemoans what he calls “the Socratic fallacy,” namely, the doctrine that one cannot recognize instances to which some general term applies unless one knows, and can give, the definition of that term. Is this a Socratic doctrine? Is it a fallacy? Defend your answer.
5. What is Plato’s doctrine of Recollection? How does he try (in the *Meno*) to establish the doctrine? How successful is he in establishing it?
6. What is “Meno’s paradox” (*Meno* 80d-e)? Is it a genuine paradox? Expound and evaluate Socrates’ response to it.
7. What is “Meno’s paradox” (*Meno* 80d-e) supposed to prove? Does it succeed in proving its conclusion? Expound and evaluate Socrates’ response to it.
8. What is “Meno’s paradox” (*Meno* 80d-e)? Is it a genuine paradox (i.e., does it succeed in establishing an apparently untenable conclusion)? Expound and evaluate Socrates’ response to it.
9. What is “Meno’s paradox” (*Meno* 80d-e)? What conclusion does it purport to establish? Does it succeed? If not, why not? Expound and evaluate Socrates’ response to it.
10. In the *Phaedo* (100ff), Plato treats the forms as “causes” — i.e., things we appeal to in giving explanations of a certain sort. Aristotle, in the *Physics* (Bk.II, Ch.3) argues that there are four senses of “cause”. In which of Aristotle’s four senses are Plato’s Forms “causes”? (Cf. Aristotle’s claim, in the *Metaphysics*, Bk. I, Ch. 9, that in the *Phaedo* Forms are said to be causes of both being and becoming.) Why are the Forms, from Aristotle’s point of view, defective as the sorts of “causes” he interprets them as being?
11. Plato offers the Theory of Forms as a solution to a number of different philosophical problems. What are those problems? How is the theory supposed to solve them? (E.g.,

- what features do Forms have that enable them to meet the philosophical demands that Plato places on them?)
12. Present, as clearly and completely as you can, and critically evaluate, Plato's "Imperfection Argument" for the existence of Forms (see *Phaedo* 73-76).
 13. Present, as clearly and completely as you can, and critically evaluate, Plato's "Imperfection Argument" at *Phaedo* 73-76. What is Plato trying to prove? How successful is the argument?
 14. Present, as clearly and completely as you can, and critically evaluate, Plato's "Argument from Knowledge" for the existence of Forms (*Republic* 476-480).
 15. Present, as clearly and completely as you can, Plato's "Argument from Knowledge" in *Republic* 476-480. What is Plato trying to prove? What assumptions does he make in the argument? Critically evaluate the argument.
 16. How, for Plato, are the questions "What is there?" and "What can we know?" related? Discuss the connections between Plato's metaphysics and his epistemology.
 17. What is Plato's "Allegory of the Cave" at *Republic* 514-517? Explain the point of the allegory.
 18. In the *Parmenides*, Plato raises several difficulties for the Theory of Forms. One of these (the "dilemma of participation," 131a-b) concerns the way in which a Form can be "in" something. Why is the notion of a Form being "in" something problematic? Can the theory escape this criticism?
 19. What implicit assumptions about the Forms are made in the Third Man argument (TMA) in the *Parmenides* (132a-b)? What reasons are there to suppose that Plato's Theory of forms is committed to these assumptions? What does the TMA show about the Theory of Forms?
 20. Present, as clearly and completely as you can, the Third Man Argument (TMA) in Plato's *Parmenides* (132a-b). What does the TMA purport to prove about the Theory of Forms? Is the TMA's conclusion damaging to the Theory? Why? What assumptions about the Forms are used (explicitly or implicitly) as the premises of the TMA? Which, if any, should Plato give up?
 21. Explain what the Third Man Argument (TMA) in Plato's *Parmenides* (132a-b) purports to prove about the Theory of Forms. Is the TMA's conclusion damaging to the Theory? Why (or, why not)? What assumptions about the Forms are used (explicitly or implicitly) as the premises of the TMA? What would Plato's theory be like without each of these assumptions?
 22. Explain what the Third Man Argument (TMA) in Plato's *Parmenides* (132a-b) purports to prove about the Theory of Forms. What are the consequences of the TMA for the epistemological role that Forms are supposed to play? What assumptions about the Forms are used (explicitly or implicitly) as the premises of the TMA? What would Plato's theory be like without each of these assumptions?

23. In what ways are Plato's Forms like standards of weight or measurement? In what ways are they different? Is it helpful, in understanding Plato's theory of Forms, to think of Forms as standards? If so, how? If not, why not?

Aristotle

1. Explain Aristotle's account of **change** in *Physics* I, 5-9 (esp. Ch. 7). Why, according to Aristotle, must there be three basic "elements" in any case of change?
2. Explain Aristotle's account of **change** in *Physics* I, 5-9 (esp. Ch. 7). What difficulties does this account pose for the ontology that Aristotle presented in the *Categories*?
3. Explain Aristotle's account of **change** in *Physics* I, 7-8 and *On Coming-to-be and Ceasing-to-be* I, 3-4. How does Aristotle deal with Parmenides' claim that "coming into being" is impossible?
4. Parmenides claims that there is no coming-to-be either (a) from "what is not" or (b) from "what is." Aristotle replies that in one sense both of these claims are correct, but in another sense they are both incorrect. Explain what Aristotle means by this, with reference to his account of change and coming-into-being in *Physics* I, 7-8 and *On Coming-to-be and Ceasing-to-be* I, 3-4.
5. Aristotle says (a) "there is a science that studies being in so far as it is being" (1003a21). But he also insists (b) "being is spoken of in many ways" (1003a34, 1028a10). (b) seems to mean that 'being' is ambiguous, but if so there does not seem to be any **one** thing for the science mentioned in (a) to study. So (a) and (b) seem to be inconsistent. How does Aristotle manage to consistently maintain both (a) and (b)?
6. What differences are there between what Aristotle has to say about substances in the *Categories* and what he (later) says about substances in the *Metaphysics*? How do you account for these differences.
7. Compare Aristotle's doctrine of primary substance in the *Categories* with what he says about primary substance in the *Metaphysics* (cf. esp. 1031^a15-18, 1037^a5-1037^b8, and 1041^a6-1041^b32). Discuss whatever similarities and differences you find in the two treatments.
8. The concept of **matter**, which did not appear in the *Categories*, plays an important role in Aristotle's *Physics* and *Metaphysics*. What is that role? What difficulties does the concept of matter raise for the doctrine of primary substance that Aristotle presented in the *Categories*? What does the *Metaphysics* tell us about primary substance?
9. Explain Aristotle's doctrine (*Phys.* II, 3) of the **four causes** (*aitia*). How might Aristotle reply to Plato's claim (*Phaedo* 100c-d) that the Form of Beauty is the **sole** cause (*aition*) of anything's being beautiful?
10. Explain Aristotle's doctrine (*Phys.* II) of the four causes (*aitia*). Explain why Aristotle thinks that natural objects, as well as artifacts, have final causes. Critically discuss his position on this point.

Comparative

1. What is Plato's theory of the structure of matter, as it is developed in the *Timaeus*? Compare Plato's theory with the theories of Empedocles and Democritus, stressing points of agreement as well as points of disagreement.
2. What is Plato's theory of the structure of the four **elements**, as it is developed in the *Timaeus* (53-58)? Compare Plato's theory with the theories of Empedocles and Democritus, stressing points of agreement as well as points of disagreement.
3. Compare Plato's theory of the four elements, as it is developed in the *Timaeus* (53-58), with what Aristotle says about matter in the *Physics* and in *On Coming-to-be and Ceasing-to-be*. Give as much detail as you can about their theories.
4. In the *Categories* (2^a34-2^b7), Aristotle argues that if primary substances did not exist, nothing else would exist. What is his argument? (Be sure to explain any technical Aristotelian notions you employ in your elucidation of the argument.) How does the ontology of Aristotle's *Categories* compare with the ontology of Plato's theory of Forms?
5. In the *Categories* (2^a34-2^b7), Aristotle argues that if primary substances did not exist, nothing else would exist. What is his argument? (Be sure to explain any technical Aristotelian notions you employ in your elucidation of the argument.) What would Plato have to say about this argument?
6. Explain Aristotle's distinction between being *said of a subject* and being *in a subject*. How is this distinction relevant to solving Plato's "Dilemma of participation" (*Parmenides* 131a-b)?
7. Compare Plato's theory of Forms with what Aristotle says about form in the *Metaphysics*. Give as much detail as you can about their theories. How much like a Platonic Form is an Aristotelian form? How, if at all, do they differ?
8. Compare Plato's and Aristotle's accounts of predication. What are the crucial differences? In what ways is Aristotle's account more complex than Plato's? What philosophical advantages, if any, does the greater complexity of Aristotle's account provide?
9. Sophie is a cat, and Sophie is gray — these are facts. How, according to Plato's Theory of Forms, are these two facts to be analyzed? How would Aristotle, in the *Categories*, analyze them? Use this example to set out the main differences between the ontology of Plato's Theory of Forms and the ontology of Aristotle's *Categories*.
10. Sophie is a beautiful cat — that is a (complex) fact. How, according to Plato's Theory of Forms, is this fact to be analyzed? How would Aristotle, in the *Categories*, analyze it? Use this example to set out the main differences between the ontology of Plato's Theory of Forms and the ontology of Aristotle's *Categories*.
11. Compare Plato's theory of the soul (in the *Phaedo*) with Aristotle's (in *De Anima*). Point out as many similarities and as many differences as you can find. Which theory seems more plausible to you, and why?

12. Give a brief exposition of the theory of soul that Aristotle sets out in *De Anima* II, 1-3. What is a soul, according to Aristotle? How does his conception of the soul compare to Plato's in the *Phaedo*? Which theory seems more plausible to you, and why?