Phil. 373: Discussion Questions

February 1st, 2017

Readings: Plato. *Republic.* Translator's Introduction (pages 971-972) and Book VII. Lines 514 - 530d.

Review: Phaedo and Innate Conceps

Find you group from last class.

1. Outline Socrates' argument in *Phaedo* (Lines 74-75) that our concept of equality is innate. Remember to follow the six steps I provided in previous classes. In particular, next to each premise of your reconstruction, there ought to be a quotation from *Phaedo* that indicates you are rephrasing one of Socrates' claims.

2. Pick a premise that you think is problematic, and construct an argument with the *negation* of the problematic premise as its conclusion.

Plato on sense perception

1. In *Republic* 523c-524c, Socrates claims that the senses can be misleading in several ways. Enumerate one or two ways the senses are misleading according to Socrates, and give examples of your own to illustrate Socrates' claims.

2. What is the conclusion of the following passage? State the conclusion in your own words.

> Then you also know that, although [geometers] use visible figures and make claims about them, their thought isnt directed to them but to those other things that they are like. They make their claims for the sake of the square itself and the diagonal itself, not the diagonal they draw, and similarly with the others. These figures that they make and draw, of which shadows and reflections in water are images, they now in turn use as images, in seeking to see those others themselves that one cannot see except by means of thought.

> Republic, 510e.

Forms and the visible world

1. What does Plato claim (perhaps implicitly) about the visible world in the following passage?

   > *But as for the ratio of night to day, of days to a month, of a month to a year, or of the motions of the stars to any of them or to each other, don't you think he'll consider it strange to believe that theyre always the same and never deviate anywhere at all or to try in any sort of way to grasp the truth about them, since they're connected to body and visible?*

   > Republic, 530b.

2. What does Plato claim about mathematical objects in the following passage?

   > *Now, no one with even a little experience of geometry will dispute that this science is entirely the opposite of what is said about it in the accounts of its practitioners. How do you mean? They give ridiculous accounts of it, though they can't help it, for they speak like practical men, and all their accounts refer to doing things. They talk of "squaring," "applying," "adding," and the like, whereas the entire subject is pursued for the sake of knowledge ... That's easy to agree to, for geometry is knowledge of what always is.*

   > Republic, 527a.

3. Construct an argument with the following conclusion: "If we know only things about the visible world, then we have no mathematical knowledge."