

PHLB16H3S POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY: ANCIENT GREECE AND MIDDLE AGES

STUDY QUESTIONS (I): PERICLES, SOCRATES AND PLATO

General Instructions

- The test will be divided into **three sections**: (A) short answer questions [5 points each], (B) textual analysis questions [20 points each], and (C) an essay question [40 points]. At the beginning of each section are instructions about what kind of answer you are expected to give and how many questions you are supposed to answer. Please, pay close attention to those instructions.
- The number of points for each question is indicated in brackets. (Total points: 100)
- Please, include **only relevant material** in your answers; irrelevant material may undermine relevant claims and lead to less than full credit for relevant claims.

A. Short Answer Questions

Instructions

Choose four of the seven expressions, terms or phrases listed below and give a **brief explanation** following these instructions:

- **Mention the context(s)** in which these expressions were discussed in class (or in the readings).
- **Clarify their meaning and their role** in the corresponding discussion(s).
- If one expression has been discussed in several contexts, **refer only to those contexts which you consider most significant**.

The recommended length for each answer is one half-page.

Sample Questions

- (A1) *Funeral Oration*
- (A2) **Sparta vs. Athens**
- (A3) **Sophist**
- (A4) **Rhetorician**
- (A5) **Delphic Oracle**
- (A6) **Socratic Mission**
- (A7) **Socrates' Wisdom**
- (A8) *Elenchus* (refutation, cross-examination)
- (A9) **'Gadfly' Analogy**
- (A10) **Unexamined life**

- (A11) **'The many vs. the wise' Argument**
- (A12) **Civil disobedience**
- (A13) ***"Persuade or obey"***
- (A14) **Tacit agreement**
- (A15) **Empirical Method vs. Normative Method**
- (A16) ***"Justice is the advantage of the stronger"***
- (A17) ***"The ruler insofar as he is a ruler"***
- (A18) ***Pleonexia* (greed; desire to outdo others)**
- (A19) **Three kinds of goods**
- (A20) **'Good for its own sake *and* for its consequences' vs. 'Good *only* for its consequences'**
- (A21) **Glaucon and Adeimantus' Challenge**
- (A22) **Contractarian Theory of Justice**
- (A23) **Gyges' Ring**
- (A24) **City-Individual Analogy**
- (A25) **Self-Sufficiency Principle**
- (A26) **Principle of the Natural Division of Labour**
- (A27) **'City of Pigs'**
- (A28) **'Noble Lie'**
- (A29) **Myth of the Metals**
- (A30) ***"Friends possess everything in common"***
- (A31) **Abolition of Family and Property**
- (A32) **The 'Bald Men' Argument**
- (A33) **Philosopher Kings**
- (A34) **The Sun**
- (A35) **The Form of the Good**
- (A36) **The Line**
- (A37) **Allegory of the Cave**
- (A38) **Reality vs. Appearances**
- (A39) **Visible vs. Intelligible**
- (A40) **Form of the Good**

B. Textual Analysis Questions

Instructions

Choose 2 of the following 4 sets of questions.

*Advice: Read the questions and texts carefully; in some cases, part of the answer is already contained in the text and/or question and you just have to spell it out.

Questions

Question B1. In the following text from the *Funeral Oration*, Pericles mentions several virtues of Athenian democracy. Comment on the text by answering the questions that follow:

Our constitution does not copy the laws of neighbouring states; we are rather a pattern to others than imitators ourselves. Its administration favours the many instead of the few; this is why it is called a democracy. If we look to the laws, they afford equal justice to all in their private differences; if no social standing, advancement in public life falls to reputation for capacity, class considerations not being allowed to interfere with merit; nor again does poverty bar the way, if a man is able to serve the state, he is not hindered by the obscurity of his condition. The freedom which we enjoy in our government extends also to our ordinary life. ...

(Thucydides, *Peloponnesian War* 2.37)

- (a) What political system is Pericles defending Athenian democracy against? (5)
- (b) Why does he think democracy is a better system? (5)
- (c) According to Pericles, what is the main criterion for success in public life in the Athenian democratic system? (5)
- (d) Is Pericles right about how success is distributed in the Athenian society of his time? If not, explain how the system deviated from the description that he is giving in the text. (5)

Question B2. In the *Apology* Socrates explains the origin of his unpopularity. Comment on the text by answering the questions that follow:

As a result of this investigation, men of Athens, I acquired much unpopularity...many slanders came from these people with a reputation for wisdom, for in each case *the bystanders thought that I myself possessed the wisdom that I proved that my interlocutor did not have.*

(Plato, *Apology* 22e-23a)

- (a) What is the investigation that leads to Socrates' unpopularity? (5)
- (b) Why did Socrates acquire a reputation for wisdom? (5)
- (c) What two kinds of ignorance did Socrates discover in those whose wisdom he tested? (5)
- (d) Do you think that Socrates is wise? Why?/Why not? (5)

Question B3. In the *Apology* Socrates defends his way of life and he argues that what matters most is not just to *survive* but to *live well*. Comment on the text by answering the questions that follow:

Someone might say: “Are you not ashamed, Socrates, to have followed the kind of occupation that has led to your being now in danger of death?” However, I should be right to reply to him: “You are wrong, sir, if you think that a man who is any good at all should take into account the risk of life or death; he should look to this only in his actions, whether what he does is right or wrong, whether he is acting like a good or a bad man.” According to your view, all the heroes who died at Troy were inferior people, especially the son of Thetis who was so contemptuous of danger compared with disgrace.¹² When he was eager to kill Hector, his goddess mother warned him, as I believe, in some such words as these: “My child, if you avenge the death of your comrade, Patroclus, and you kill Hector, you will die yourself, for your death is to follow immediately after Hector’s.” Hearing this, he despised death and danger and was much more afraid to live a coward who did not avenge his friends. “Let me die at once,” he said, “when once I have given the wrongdoer his deserts, rather than remain here, a laughingstock by the curved ships, a burden upon the earth.” Do you think he gave thought to death and danger?

- (a) What is the occupation that has led Socrates to “being now in danger of death”? (5)
- (b) In what sense does Socrates think that his present case is parallel to that of Achilles “son of Thetis”? (5)
- (c) Later in the text Socrates says that he would not stop engaging in philosophical dialogue with people even if that was the penalty imposed by the jury. What does that claim reflect in about his position of civil disobedience? (5)
- (d) Why does Socrates think that his occupation is so important both for himself and for the city? (5)

Question B4. In Plato’s *Apology*, Socrates claims that he cannot be harmed by his accusers and that even if he is condemned to death, the jury will not be able to harm him. Comment on the text by answering the questions that follow:

if you kill the sort of man I say I am, you will not harm me more than yourselves. Neither Meletus nor Anytus can harm me in any way; he could not harm me, for I do not think it is permitted that a better man be harmed by a worse; certainly he might kill me, or perhaps banish or disfranchise me, which he and maybe others think to be great harm, but I do not think so. I think he is doing himself much greater harm doing what he is doing now, attempting to have a man executed unjustly.

- (a) What two notions of harm does Socrates recognize in the text? (5)
- (b) What does Socrates mean when he says “if you kill [me] ... you will not harm me more than yourselves”? (5)
- (c) How do Socrates’ claims in this text relate to his general message about the good life? (5)
- (d) Do you think that Socrates’ preferred notion of harm commits him to abide by the laws and accept the verdict of the jury? Why?/Why not? (5)

Question B5. In Plato's *Republic*, Glaucon offers an account of the origin of justice as the first element of his challenge to Socrates. Comment on the text by answering the questions that follow:

They say that to do injustice is naturally good and to suffer injustice bad, but that the badness of suffering it so far exceeds the goodness of doing it that those who have done and suffered injustice and tasted both, but who lack the power to do it and avoid suffering it, decide that it is profitable to come to an agreement with each other neither to do injustice nor to suffer it. As a result, they begin to make laws and covenants, and what the law commands they call lawful and just. This, they say, is the origin and essence of justice. It is intermediate between the best and the worst. The best is to do injustice without paying the penalty; the worst is to suffer it without being able to take revenge. Justice is a mean between these two extremes. People value it not because it is a good but because they are too weak to do injustice with impunity. Someone who has the power to do this, however, and is a true man wouldn't make an agreement with anyone not to do injustice in order not to suffer it. For him that would be madness. This is the nature of justice, according to the argument, Socrates, and these are its natural origins.

(*Rep.* 358 e-359 b)

- (a) What kind of theory of justice is Glaucon proposing in the underlined text? Explain briefly your answer. (5)
- (b) What is the general thesis about justice that Glaucon is supporting with this account of the origin of justice and that he is expecting Socrates to refute? In other words, what is Glaucon's challenge in the *Republic*? (5)
- (c) What other two arguments does Glaucon use in support of his challenge? (5)
- (d) Does Socrates agree with this view of the origin of justice? Why?/Why not? (5)

Question B6. In Plato's *Republic*, Socrates offers a strong defence of gender equality and advocates for allowing those women with a golden soul to perform the same tasks and to receive the same education as the male guardians. Comment on the text by answering the questions that follow:

When we assigned different ways of life to different natures and the same ones to the same, we didn't at all examine the form of natural difference and sameness we had in mind or in what regard we were distinguishing them. . . . [So] we might ask ourselves whether the natures of bald and long-haired men are the same or opposite. And, when we agree that they are opposite, then, if the bald ones are cobblers, we ought to forbid the long-haired ones to be cobblers, and if the long-haired ones are cobblers, we ought to forbid this to the bald ones. . . . And aren't we in this ridiculous position because at that time we did not introduce every form of difference and sameness in nature, but focused on the one form of sameness and difference that was relevant to the particular ways of life themselves?

(*Rep.* 358 e-359 b)

- (a) To what principle about distribution of labour does Socrates refer in the first line? [Note: the principle at issue was established at the beginning of Socrates' account of the ideal city] (5)
- (b) In what way does Socrates want to refine that principle now? (5)
- (c) What is the point of the argument about "bald and long-haired men"? (5)
- (d) How does this point help to establish that the women of the guardian class can perform the same tasks and receive the same education as the male guardians? (5)

Question B7. In Plato's *Republic* Socrates defends the thesis that philosophers should be the rulers of the ideal city. Comment on the text by answering the questions that follow:

Unless . . . philosophers become kings in the cities or those whom we now call kings and rulers philosophize truly and adequately and there is a conjunction of political power and philosophy . . . there can be no cessation of evils . . . for cities nor, I think, for the human race. (*Republic* V.473c11–d6)

- (a) What are the two central characteristics of philosophers that make of them the most adequate rulers? (5)
- (b) What kinds of problems emerge when people from the iron and bronze classes occupy power? (5)
- (c) How is the philosopher represented in the allegory of the cave? (5)
- (d) Why is it that not everybody becomes a philosopher in the ideal city presented in Plato's *Republic*? (5)

Question B8. In book IV of the *Republic*, Adeimantus complains that Socrates is not making the rulers of the ideal city very happy. Comment on Adeimantus' objection by answering questions about the following text:

And Adeimantus interrupted: How would you defend yourself, Socrates, he said, if someone told you that you aren't making these men very happy and that it's their own fault? The city really belongs to them, yet they derive no good from it. Others own land, build fine big houses, acquire furnishings to go along with them, make their own private sacrifices to the gods, entertain guests, and also, of course, possess what you were talking about just now, gold and silver and all the things that are thought to belong to people who are blessedly happy. But one might well say that your guardians are simply settled in the city like mercenaries and that all they do is watch over it. (*Republic* IV.419a)

- (a) In this passage, what kinds of things does Adeimantus assume that make people happy? (5)
- (b) Why does Adeimantus' description of happiness here not apply to Socrates' conception of the guardians? (5)
- (c) What kinds of things make the guardians happy according to Socrates? And the manual workers? (5)
- (d) How does Socrates respond to the objection raised here by Adeimantus? (5)

Question B9. In the *Republic*, Socrates talks about poverty and wealth as something that corrupts the city, and he tries to maintain them away from his ideal city-state. Comment on this issue by answering the questions about the text below:

[E]ach of them is a great many cities, not a city, as they say in the game. At any rate, each of them consists of two cities at war with one another, that of the poor and that of the rich, and each of these contains a great many. If you approach them as one city, you'll be making a big mistake.

(*Republic* IV.422e-423a)

- (a) What is the main consequence of introducing poverty and wealth in the city according to the text? (5)
- (b) What is the change that Socrates makes in his the ideal city to avoid this consequence? (5)
- (c) What is the assumption about human nature made by those who think that poverty and wealth are unavoidable? (5)
- (d) Does Socrates agree with that assumption? Why?/Why not? (5)

Question 10. In Plato's *Republic* Socrates introduces several drastic measures to preserve political unity. Comment on this issue by answering the questions that follow:

[M]arriage, the having of wives, and the procreation of children must be governed as far as possible by the old proverb: Friends possess everything in common.

(*Republic* IV.423e-424a)

- (a) According to the quoted text, what institution should be abolished in the ideal city? (5)
- (b) Which is the other main institution that Socrates wants to abolish amongst the guardians by using the same proverb as above? (5)
- (c) Why does Socrates think it is important to abolish these two central institutions? (5)
- (d) What are the other two main changes that Socrates introduces in his ideal city as discussed in class? (5)

Question 11. In the *Republic* Socrates defines justice as “doing one’s own work and not meddling with what isn’t one’s own” (433a-b). Comment on this definition and explain the quoted passage by answering the questions that follow:

But I suppose that when someone, who is by nature a craftsman or some other kind of money-maker, is puffed up by wealth, or by having a majority of votes, or by his own strength, or by some other such thing, and attempts to enter the class of soldiers, or one of the soldiers tries to enter that of the judges and guardians, and these exchange their tools and honors, or when the same person tries to do all these things at once, then I think that you’ll agree that these exchanges and this sort of meddling bring the city to ruin.

(*Republic* IV.434a-b)

- (a) In the “Funeral Oration”, Pericles claims that in Athens public office, and political success in general, is assigned by merit. What are other possible ways of acquiring political power suggested in the text? (5)
- (b) In what way do the examples of the craftsman and the soldier from the passage violate Socrates’ definition of justice? (5)
- (c) What is the main requirement that the rulers should fulfill according to the *Republic*? Explain why. (5)
- (d) What is the solution that Socrates proposes in the *Republic* to guarantee that merit and political authority coincide? (5)

Question 12. In *Republic* V Socrates discusses a potential objection against his defence of gender equality. Comment on this objection by answering the questions that follow:

“Socrates and Glaucon, there’s no need for others to argue with you, for you yourselves, when you began to found your city, agreed that each must do his own work in accordance with his nature.”

And I think we certainly did agree to that.

“Can you deny that a woman is by nature very different from a man?”

Of course not.

“And isn’t it appropriate to assign different work to each in accordance to its nature?”

Certainly.

“How is it, then, that you aren’t mistaken and contradicting yourselves when you say that men and women must do the same things, when their natures are so completely separate and distinct?”

(*Republic* V.453b-c)

- (a) Name the principle, used by Socrates from the beginning of his description of the ideal city, that works as main premise for the objection presented in the text. (5)
- (b) How does the objection use the mentioned principle to attack Socrates’ defence of gender equality? (5)
- (c) How does Socrates respond to this objection? (5)
- (d) Does Socrates agree that women are very different in nature from men? In what sense? (5)

Question 13. In *Republic* VI Socrates presents an analogy between the sun and the Form of the Good. Comment on this analogy by answering the questions formulated after the text:

You know that, when we turn our eyes to things whose colors are no longer in the light of day but in the gloom of night, the eyes are dimmed and seem nearly blind, as if clear vision were no longer in them.

Of course.

Yet whenever one turns them on things illuminated by the sun, they see clearly, and vision appears in those very same eyes?

Indeed.

Well, understand the soul in the same way: When it focuses on something illuminated by truth and what is, it understands, knows, and apparently possesses understanding, but when it focuses on what is mixed with obscurity, on what comes to be and passes away, it opines and is dimmed, changes its opinions this way and that, and seems bereft of understanding.

It does seem that way.

So that what gives truth to the things known and the power to know to the knower is the form of the good.

(*Republic* VI.508c-e)

- (a) The analogy of the sun has two aspects, metaphysical and epistemological –which of the two aspects is being explained in the quoted text? Justify your answer. (5)
- (b) Explain the second aspect of the analogy. (5)
- (c) Why is it important for Socrates to show that the Good is that through which we know all the other things? Particularly, what role does the Form of the Good play in Socrates' argument that philosophers should rule? (10)

Question 14. In *Republic* VI Socrates presents an analogy between the sun and the Form of the Good. Comment on this analogy by answering the questions formulated after the text:

You'll be willing to say, I think, that the sun not only provides visible things with the power to be seen but also with coming to be, growth, and nourishment, although it is not itself coming to be.

How could it be?

Therefore, you should also say that not only do the objects of knowledge owe their being known to the good, but their being is also due to it, although the good is not being, but superior to it in rank and power.

(*Republic* VI.509b)

- (a) The analogy of the sun has two aspects, metaphysical and epistemological –which of the two aspects is being explained in the quoted text? Justify your answer. (5)
- (b) Explain the other aspect of the analogy. (5)
- (c) Why is it important for Socrates to show that the Good is the most real of all things? Particularly, what role does the Form of the Good play in Socrates' argument that Justice is good in itself? (10)